THE WIRE 298 | DECEMBER 2008

WIRE

Antony & The Johnsons

Back to nature

THE WIRE 298 | DECEMBER 2008
Adventures in Modern Music
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Florian Hecker | Radio Ballads

West African psychedelia | Band Of Holy Joy

Graveyards | Noodles | Bettina Köster | Goodiepal

Antony & The Johnsons | Florian Hecker | Radio Ballads | West African psychedelia | Band Of Holy Joy

Whitehouse
Asceticists 2006
To experience the incredible "Asceticists 2006" is to bare your fragile soul beyond what you would normally wish to know amidst ear shredding afro noise madness of each of the 7 tracks
Very Friendly/Susan Lawly LP

Whitehouse
Erector
Originally recorded in 1980 "Erector" was harsher and less "industrial" sounding than the first two albums and arguably became the seminal influence, along with "The 150 Murderous Passions LP", for the subsequent wave in the mid/late 80s of noise projects (in particular Japanese)
Very Friendly/Susan Lawly LP

Psychic TV/PTV3
Mr Alien Brain vs. The Skinwalkers
New from counter cultural provocateur Genesis Breyer P Orridge and her reactivated Psychic TV aka "PTV3". Selections include the previously unreleased mix of "New York Story" by Michael Gira (Angels of Light, Swans) and the DVD features 38 mins of unseen cut and rehearsal footage and more
Invisible Records CD/DVD

Human Greed
Black Hill Midnight at the Blighted Star
Michael Begg's sullen masterpiece feat. Julia Kent, Fabrizio Palumbo, Clodagh Simonds, David Tibet. "Sometimes it's like the silver coin of the moon is tossed like alms for the poor across the cold midnight sky"
Lumberton Trading Company CD

Hush Arbors
Hush Arbors
There are songs here that resonate with the minor key melancholy of Bert Jansch or perhaps even Mark Kozelek, while others hint at a Wire subscriber's Siamese Dream: all propulsive rhythms and lysergic electric guitar. Some albums are "growers" – not this one. While repeated listens reveal more and more detail, as good albums should, this is also an album that commands immediate attention
Ecstatic Peace CD

Kid606
Die Soundboy Die
Kid606 returns to the fray with "die soundboy die": nine original songs that devour and warp current musical trends like dubstep, bassline, ragga, techno and rave (both old and new!) in his very unique and original way
Very Friendly/Tigerbeat 6 CD

Religious Knives
The Door
An active four piece for a little more than a year now, all throughout, these four have traced a path away from the clamour they once knew, bathing slight guitars, interlocking vocals and solemn basslines in reedy organs and mercurial modular synths
Ecstatic Peace CD

Paul Flaherty/Bill Nace/ Thurston Moore
S/T
A session Flaherty set up in the late winter of early 2003. There are 3 tracks ("sex", "drugs" and "lavender"), one short, two looong. It is a prime example of this threesome's focus and sonic storytelling: ferocious yet pensive
Ecstatic Peace CD

Food For Animals
Belly
Straight outta Washington DC, this power trio deliver their first full-length full of busted speaker beats, bizarre noise-soundscapes and slammin raps delivered with every bit of force like the hurricane they fly through
Dark Path Three CD

Sewer Election
Kassettmusik
Cassette loops and relieved filth from Sewer Election: known for his trademark wall of noise-works. His best work to date. Intense, rough and mind expanding stuff! Limited to 500 in sexy b/w digipack!
Inlet CD

Groper/Inca Ore
Split
Liz (Groper) and Eva (Inca Ore) compiled twenty minutes of unreleased material each on both sides of a C40 recorded at home: a recording that Acuarela now re-releases on CD with new cover art and remastered sound.
Acuarela CD

Aidan Baker and Tim Hecker
Fantasma Parastasie
Fantasma Parastasie sees the pairing of Aidan Baker of the Ambient Doom band Nadja, & Tim Hecker: 2 of Canada's brightest musicians in the world of abstract electronic music
Alien8 CD

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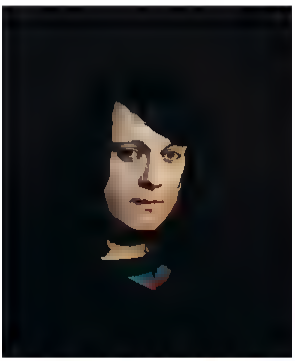

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The Masthead

The Shrine, mid-70s

He may have been a pioneer of the extended guitar freakout, but Frank Zappa wasn't too enamoured with the new psychedelic culture that was breaking out like a rash all across his native California in the late 1960s. "Well, let's all play bongos in the dirt," was Frank's sneering dismissal of the kind of communal hippy beatdowns that emerged post-Woodstock. Frank's critique, if you can call it that, may have neatly skewered the primitive percussion jams of Ya Ho Wa 13 and the like. But transplanted to a Lagos compound circa mid-1970s, the outwardly reductive proposition of playing bongos in the dirt took on a deeper and wholly other resonance.

In the accepted narrative of popular music, psychedelia begins and ends with Pink Floyd and The Boyle Family at London's UFO club, or The Grateful Dead and The Garden Of Delights at San Francisco's Avalon Ballroom. At the Shrine, the most notorious of all Lagos compounds, and the domain of Fela Anikulapo-Kuti, one of the most notorious musical figures of the 20th century, Nigerian or otherwise, the guitar solos and oil lamps may have been in short supply, but the hand drums were front and centre and the psychedelic experience was in full effect.

Writing in this month's Primer on the impact of psychedelia imported from the US and Britain on the musicians of Nigeria, Ghana, Benin and Togo in the late 60s and early 70s, Richard Henderson references the late African music scholar and collector Ronnie Graham, describing the kind of hallucinatory all night jam sessions that would regularly take place at Lagos venues such as The Shrine on the cusp of the 70s. Fela doesn't figure directly in Richard's essay, partly because he was the subject of his own Primer in *The Wire* 234. But he's there in spirit, thanks to the entry on Tony Allen, the drummer whose hyper-syncopated expansions of the kind of metronomic on-the-one backbeats developed by James Brown's drummers Clyde Stubblefield and John 'Jabo' Starks in the late 60s were the foundation of Fela's patented Afrobeat.

As Peter Shapiro pointed out in that earlier Primer on Fela's sprawling back catalogue, the music of his group Africa 70 was so rhythmically advanced it was necessary to distinguish between the lead and rhythm conga players. In any language, psychedelia can be instantly understood as a system for transporting all and sundry into altered states of consciousness. Listening to the Tony Allen albums included in Richard's survey, what makes the music some of the most transported of its time is the way the group vamps develop over extended timelines into trance rhythms whose psychotropic effect is deepened by the meshing of chicken scratch guitar riffs with insistent shekere and stick patterns, and on *No Discrimination*, the kind of squelching synth lines Bobby Byrd unleashed on Fred Wesley & The JB's 1973 psych-funk classic "Blow Your Head".

Beyond the capacity of rhythm patterns inspired by American R&B but diverted to run local channels and enhanced by wah-wah pedals and Minimoogs to affect ecstatically altered states, the story of psychedelic culture in West Africa is part of the wider post-colonial narrative. As Richard Henderson writes, the new music emerging from the US and Britain, with its promise of pop-cultural revolution, mind expansion and superfly styling, impacted with profound force on a generation that had recently emerged from the dark days of colonialism, offering vivid new models for self-expression, from Haight-Ashbury and Swingin' London to The Band Of Gypsys and P-funk.

Who would have thought that playing bongos in the dirt would develop into such a serious business?

Tony Herrington

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Val Wilmer

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See page 98 and the inside back cover

Letters

Cultured cassettes

All channels open

Re: Unofficial Channels, *The Wire* 297. What about music bought ad hoc from the local car boot sale/charity shop? This is about buying music blind: no review, no previous knowledge, basically no fucking clue. It's like having a large music library to hand: you can dip in, try it, and if you don't like it, recycle it or give it (back) to a charity shop. Obviously the bulk of the offerings are inane pop music from the decades, but hidden treasures lurk.

I've bought music that otherwise wouldn't have been listened to: Homesick James, Chickasaw Mudd Puppies, Elbow, Nick Drake, Andy Sheppard, The French, Home Groan plus many more. All at the bargain price of between 50p to £2 (if I'm pushed). Obviously you have all the main gronps as well, Led Zeppelin, Talking Heads, Beatles, Roxy Music (that brings in Eno, and that's a story in itself), etc, etc. This can reap rewards, having picked up *The White Album* (Canadian import) for 50p, most of Led Zep's albums, and (personal favourites) albums by Joy Division, Cocteau Twins, Marc & The Mambas and The New York Dolls. I made a few choices that turned out to be howlers along the way, but these have been promptly dispatched into a plastic bag and shuffled off to the nearest charity shop.

You can find hidden extras too, such as signed concert tickets, pics and in one case a single, blank on one side with the artists' signatures engraved on the other. Shame the music was crap, but beggars can't be choosers.

Some have never even been played, still wrapped in their plastic shroud, having never seen the light of day. On recent trips I've been drawn back to the punk era: Stiff Little Fingers, Wayne County & The Electric Chairs, The Slits and early Damned, to name a few. Experimental music, as you can imagine, isn't well catered for, although I did find some strange German donble vinyl release once that included Tangerine Dream.

Another, and in my mind much neglected source of music is the cassette (this is the cheapest source, costing between 10p and 50p on average). You can still get artists on this medium which have long disappeared on vinyl: Jim Hendrix, Aphrodite's Child, Van Morrison, or in some cases artists that only released on tape. This, sadly, is also the weakest format. I once found a rather unusual T-Rex that after a few plays completely chewed itself up.

So ignore the name-calling of friends and family, as you'll have the last laugh. Good hunting.

Steve Funnell via email

Two converging points of view regarding 'shanty' blogs. From a music addict point of view, the situation now with all these sharing blogs is that of a musical nirvana where you can dig out all the treasures you've been looking for for so long. And for free! From an experimental musician point of view (ie as a member of Vox Populi), what happened to all our previous recordings, mainly dating from the 80s, is revelatory. EVERYTHING is now available on four different blogs. Even very confidential cassettes (just 30 copies) are now available worldwide on MP3! I even discovered compilations with our music that I had completely lost track of. It's not so surprising considering the numerous musical invitations to which we answered positively in those times. I didn't want our recent reissue programme to interfere commercially with this situation. Can I stop people downloading my music when I download myself on a regular basis? That's why our two reissued LPs are finely remastered and feature nearly 50 per cent unreleased recordings. This policy works out fine considering the state of the business: the CDs are selling OK and we're now largely more heard today than two decades ago.

We're surely not in heaven, but, musically speaking, everything is fine.

Axel Kyron (Vox Populi) Paris, France

The magazine seems to be on a roll in recent months. The *Phonoromo* disc (*The Wire* 296) was a highlight among the free CDs given to subscribers, while last month's "cassette" cover image was a masterpiece and surely deserving of an award. The cover feature itself was remarkably relevant and, I think, brave. Because of it, while I write this, I am listening to the last thing I expected to be hearing in 2008 – a 1989 recording of a DJ Red Alert show from Kiss FM circa 1989. It's brilliant.

John Broadley via email

Blow up

Re: Sarah Lownder's criticisms (Letters, *The Wire* 297) of my Three Blows review. One of her main gripes seams to be any relationship which artists taking part in Three Blows may or may not have with The Modern Institute. While it's true that only Richard Wright, Luke Fowler and Tony Swain are directly represented by The Modern Institute, dots can be joined in other ways. Danny Saunders from Correcto has worked as assistant to Jim Lambie, who is represented by The Modern Institute, for more than a decade. Stevie Jones of Rude Pravo's old group, El Hombre Trajeado, appeared in a video collaboration released by Luke Fowler through The Modern Institute. Shane Connolly of Tattle Toes has also worked with Stevie Jones of Rude Pravo. And so on.

The Modern Institute donated £415 for the production of Three Blows merchandise, and The Modern Institute logo appears on the programme. I have no criticisms of any of this. As Sarah herself notes on the website of the Scottish Arts Council whose Visual Arts department funded Three Blows with a grant of £10,000, "many of the invited participants are already friends and collaborators". Given Sarah's personal and professional connections, I would also include her in that network, which I described as "based around Glasgow's Modern Institute" and not, in Sarah's words, "connected to The Modern Institute". The meanings of the two phrases are different.

Why Sarah isn't keen on Three Blows being associated with what I described in my review as "a radical visual arts scene" at The Modern Institute is a matter for her. I meant the association as a positive thing, and to illustrate my surprise at how conventional some of the performances appeared to me. Whatever preparations artists participating in Three Blows made in relationship to the St Cecilia's space, in my view some of them didn't carry over in terms of construction or spatial awareness.

As Sarah correctly points out, my review in *The Wire* was the fourth time I'd written about the event. Two of those articles, in *MAP* (not "*The Mop*" as Sarah should know as she also contributes to it) and *The List*, were short preview pieces, one featuring an email interview with Sarah, the other with quotes from Sarah taken from a telephone interview. The piece in *MAP* was presented as a straight first-person piece by Sarah, and was produced in full collaboration with her, with all proposed edits presented to her at every stage.

The third piece, a review in *The Herald*, while not uncritical, gave it, in the necessary broadsheet parlance, four stars. Sarah suggests that my review in *The Wire* was "the most unpleasant" of my four pieces. This contrasts with Howie Reeves (Letters, *The Wire* 296), who, despite his disappointment with my review, notes that it "wasn't scathing or nasty about any of the acts". Both views are valid, as are my own criticisms of Three Blows, which I don't believe were "deriding the local musicians who participated", as Sarah put it, in any way.

As for Sarah's speculation of how I "suck up" to Mayo Thompson and Keith Rowe, Sarah chaired a discussion between both artists on the Sunday afternoon of Three Blows, which I chose not to mention. Perhaps it might have been more consistent with Sarah's views to have all Three Blows artists appear on the panel.

I still believe Three Blows was a significant initiative and hope it happens again. It is not, however, above criticism.

Neil Cooper via email

The Three Blows correspondence is now closed – Ed

Orchestral manoeuvres

I don't know the records David Keenan was reviewing (Jazz & Improv, *The Wire* 297), but he might be right to draw attention to the sameness that can afflict some records of free playing. It's like rock 'n' roll (or jazz or C&W or laptopera) I suppose: there are a handful of people who can really do it well and then there's everybody else.

His sweeping generalisation about the timidity of the participants in improvising orchestras is a bit unfair though: not all of us are able to stare unblinking at the white-hot core of screaming creativity as the gamma rays of inspiration melt our very bones.

Can I have a prize for inventing the term 'laptopera'?

George Burt (Glasgow Improvisera Orchestra) via email

The Bob medley

Re: Chris Sharp's review of Robert Haigh's *Written On Water* (Soundcheck, *The Wire* 297). As a long-time fan of Haigh's early works, I wanted to point out that there is some important information missing in his review (probably he decided just to keep it short). Robert Haigh has been composing music since the early 1980s, first under the name Fote, later Sema, and only in the mid-80s as Robert Haigh. Also, *Juliet Of The Spirits* was not an album but an EP, his first solo album was *Three Seasons Only* (1985) and after that he released *Valentine Out Of Season* (1986, on Nurse With Wound's United Dairies) and *A Waltz In Plain C* (1989, on his own Le Rey Records). Not wanting to sound arrogant, I just wanted to share this bit of info.

Fred Samson via email

Corrections

Issue 297 On the inside page the feature on Anthony Braxton should have been credited to Bill Shoemaker, not Bill Meyer. In Soundcheck, Alan Licht plays guitar on the second set of Jandek's *Glasgow Sunday 2005*, not Loren Connors. □

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Bitstream

News from under the radar

Terry Fox

Animal Collective

Plans are afoot to reissue the whole of the **Nick Cave And The Bad Seeds** back catalogue next year. The series begins with the first four albums, *From Her To Eternity* (1984), *The Firstborn Is Dead* (1985), *Kicking Against The Pricks* and *Your Funeral My Trial* (both 1986). Each will be released as a deluxe collector's edition, featuring B sides and a specially commissioned short film by UK artists Iain Forsyth and Jane Pollard. Cave is also due to present the 2008 Turner art prize at Tate Britain on 1 December, following in the footsteps of Dennis Hopper and Madonna.

Sound artist **Terry Fox** has died in Cologne aged 65. Fox, also a sculptor, explored the sculptural possibilities of sound in his performances and installations, demonstrating a deep sensitivity to the potential of space to shape sound. The music he is perhaps best known for are his pieces for bowed and plucked piano wire, which he would stretch out across his performance spaces in order to probe the acoustics of the location. *Ataraxia*, one of *The Wire*'s top 15 Modern Composition records in 1999, collects recordings of some of these experiments.

Brian Eno has developed a new interactive application for the Apple iPhone. *Bloom* allows users to create their own Ambient compositions via the iPhone's touch screen. *Bloom* is available from the iTunes store.

Sonic Youth's **Lee Ranaldo** and artist **Leah Singer**'s exhibition *Space Within These Lines Not Dedicated* is showing until 6 December at Hudson Valley Teaching College, New York. The work uses spoken word and field recordings to construct a narrative exploring themes of time and personal identity. hvcc.edu/teachinggallery

Throbbing Gristle provocateur **Genesis P-Orridge** and his/her resurrected Psychic TV alter ego PTV3 are releasing their second album, *Mr Alien Brain Vs The Shinwalkers*, on Sweet Nothing. The initial pressing will include an exclusive DVD boasting 30 minutes of unseen footage of Psychic TV and PTV3 live on the road and in the studio.

London's October Gallery is holding an exhibition of work by cut-up pioneer **Brion Gysin**, including his rarely seen final painting, the 16 metre long *Calligraffiti Of Fire* which draws on hieroglyphics and calligraphy. The exhibition coincides with the Burroughs Live exhibition of film footage of Gysin's collaborator **William S Burroughs** at London's Royal Academy of Arts. *Calligraffiti Of Fire* runs from 6 December to 7 February. octobergallery.co.uk

British performer and composer **Trevor Wishart** has been given the Grend Prize of €15,000 by the Giga-Hertz Award for electronic music, awarded by the ZKM Centre for Art and Media, Karlsruhe, Germany. Based in York since the early 70s, Wishart has explored music theatre, environmental sound art, choral music, digital processing and education projects. trevorwishart.co.uk

North London music retailer **Sound 323** has elected to close its doors, at least in the physical world. The shop celebrated its eight years of trading with a closing party on 18 October featuring Steve Beresford, John Bisset, Max Eastley, John Wall and others. Founder Mark Wastell is continuing the business as a mail order operation at the revamped sound323.com. **Second Layer**, previously located in the building's basement, has now taken over the entire premises at 323 Archway Road, and can be found online at secondlayer.co.uk.

London's Southbank Centre are putting on a tribute concert to folk singer **Sandy Denny**. The Lady: A Tribute To Sandy Denny will feature reinterpretations of Denny's songs, showcasing her work with Fairport Convention, Fotheringay and from her solo career. Artists participating include Marc Almond, Martin Carthy, Baby Dee, Dave Swarbrick and Jim Moray. The concert will take place on 1 December. southbankcentre.co.uk

The Wire has made a cameo appearance in a prize-winning poem, *Love Poem For Natalie Tusja Beridze* by **Don Peterson**. The poem, winner of the Forward Prize for best poem of 2008, evokes an electronic music fan's obsession with Thomas Brinkmann's wife recording artist Natalie Beridze. Selected lines read: *"I feel sure that by the time this poem sees the light of day/ Wire magazine will have honoured you with a far more extensive profile than you last merited/ when mention of that wonderful Phorrell remix/Was sandwiched between longer pieces on the notorious Kyoto-based noise guitarist Idiot O'Clock and a woman called Sonic Pleasure who plays the housebricks."*

Work by experimental film maker, musician and sound artist **Michael Snow** is to be exhibited at The Gallery at London's BFI Southbank. Though more famous for his film work, Snow instructed Albert Ayler and Don Cherry to launch straight into free improvisation without playing a "head" on the soundtrack to his film *Walking Woman*, creating a landmark free jazz album. His record *Music For Piano, Whistling, Microphone And Tape Recorder* featured in Alan Licht's Minimalist Top Ten in *Holono* magazine, and is also essential listening. *Yes Snow Show* will be the first UK exhibition solely dedicated to Snow's moving image work, and will be accompanied by screenings of his films. It runs from 5 December to 1 February 2009. bfi.org.uk/gallery

Reggae singer **Alton Ellis** died on 13 October. Known as the Godfather of Rocksteady, Ellis spearheaded the bass-heavy revolution in Jamaican music which followed ska, and christened the genre himself on the song "Get Steady – Rock Steady". He recorded numerous sides for the legendary Studio One and Treasure Isle labels, including many tracks with his sister Hortense. He was diagnosed with cancer of the lymph glands in December last year, but continued to perform both in the UK and overseas.

The Penguin Guide To Jazz Recordings has just been published in its ninth edition. A staple since 1992, the *Guide* was instigated, written and expanded every two years by former editor of *The Wire* Richard Cook and contributor Brian Morton. The latest edition, containing ratings of more than 1700 recordings, is the first to appear since Cook's death from cancer in August 2007.

Animal Collective have announced details of their ninth album, *Merriweather Post Pavilion*, due for release in January on Domino. The front cover for the record features a mindbending piece of Op Art, with hundreds of small green segments arranged so they appear to be moving when you look at them. myanimalhome.net

Yma Sumac, the Peruvian born singer who appeared on some of the key recordings of exotica, has died at the age of 86. She worked with composers such as Les Baxter and Moises Vivanco in the 50s, and in 1971 released a rock album, *Miracles*. She died in Florida.

Iceberg Slim's *Reflections*, a spoken word album narrating many of Slim's real-life experiences on the streets of Chicago, has been rereleased by Uproar Entertainment. Iceberg Slim was a huge influence on rap artists such as Ice-T and Ice Cube, both of whom adopted their monikers partly in homage to him. Two of Iceberg Slim's books, *Pimp: The Story Of My Life* and *Mama Black Widow* are also currently being adapted for the big screen. ☐

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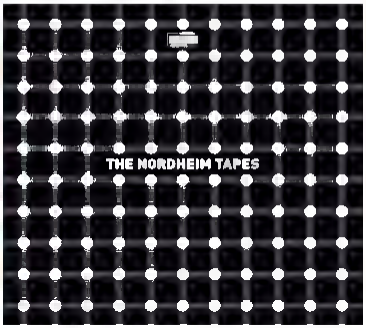

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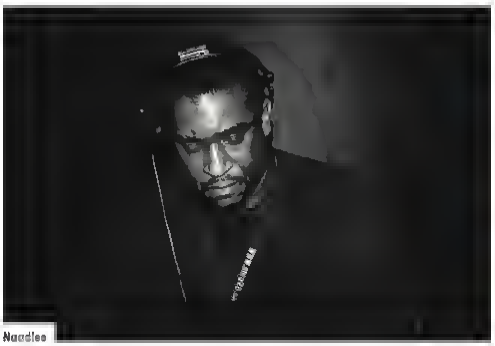
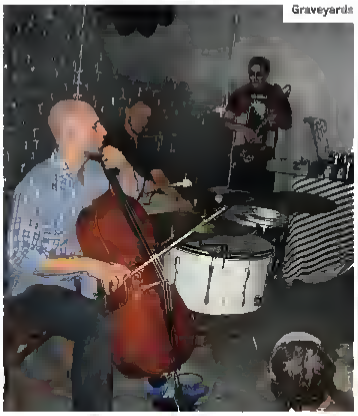
The Joined-up World of *The Wire*



Noodles



Graveyards

thewire.co.uk
New items going up on *The Wire*'s official site to coincide with this month's issue include extra images from Michael Schmelling's photo shoot with Antony Hegarty, video footage of Florian Hecker in action, MP3s and a mix from Noodles, MP3s from the Topic label's CD reissues of the BBC Radio Belleds, MP3s from Graveyards, MP3s, a competition and special mix from the Strut label, as well as a special mix from the Analog Africa label, all being in with Richard Henderson's Primer on West African psychedelia, and more.

Plus, don't forget to point your browsers towards The Portal, our daily update on all that is weird and wonderful in underground music online, including guest links from a host of outsider musicians and artists.

The Wire
The Wire has a blog. Point your browsers to thewire.co.uk/thewire for some extra-time musings on modern music matters.

Adventures In Modern Music
Resonance 104.4 FM
The Wire's weekly show on the UK's only community arts radio station is broadcast across Central London on 104.4 FM every Thursday between 9-10.30pm, with simultaneous streaming at resonancefm.com. Recent editions of the show, all of which are archived at thewire.co.uk as downloadable MP3s or streams, have featured guest mixes from Another Timbre (9 October), COH (23) and Markus Schmickler (30).

Issue 299
The January issue of *The Wire* will be on sale from 11 December and will include Rewind 08, our massive annual survey of the past 12 months in underground music, including our Top 50 Records of the Year.

For more updates on what's happening in The Joined-up World of *The Wire*, sign up to The Conduit, our fortnightly newsletter, or subscribe to our RSS feeds, both at thewire.co.uk

NB If you have problems finding copies of *The Wire* in the shops, please let us know by mailing subs@thewire.co.uk. Or better still, take out a subscription (turn to page 98 or point your browser at thewire.co.uk/subscribe), that way you'll never again have to go looking for an issue of the magazine, it will come to you. □

Fonte (Noodles): © Spencer Yeh

Trip Or Squeek

By **Savage Pencil**

CALYPSOUL 70

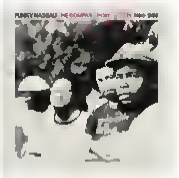
A snapshot of the incredible array of crossover calypso, reggae Latin, Afro and soul styles emerging from the Caribbean during the 70s often from small independent labels

NIGERIA 70:
LAGOS JUMP

The sound of post-independence Nigeria, a heady mix of traditional rhythms and big band highlife with Western rock, soul and jazz. The long-awaited follow-up to the first volume released in 2001

KID CREOLE – GOING PLACES
THE AUGUST DARNELL YEARS 1976-1983

The early studio work of August Darnell as he emerged from Dr. Buzzard's Original Savannah Band in direct experimental dancefloor projects for ZE Records and his immediate circle of musicians.



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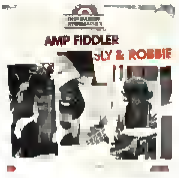

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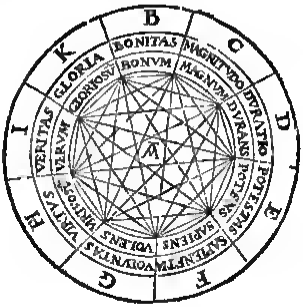

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Grimetapes

Online pirate hoard

Skepta at the Rinse FM studios

Reginald Foresythe

Before MySpace and mixtapes took precedence, pirate radio stations were Grime's lifeblood. More than that, they're where Grime became recognisably itself, where, from 1999–2004, scores of young MCs and DJs expressed a freewheeling creativity, unsure of where it was leading, sonically or commercially.

That spirit has slowly been dissolving into static, as internet radio and podcasts replace pirate stations in providing the foundations of London underground music. Gone is the localism and intimacy of the pirates – and as far as some aficionados are concerned, gone is the true spirit of Grime, when new vinyl dubplates were flying around London like locusts, nobody had a record deal, and Dizzee Rascal battled Crazy Titch in a rammed studio on a high-rise rooftop, with the mic and very nearly with fists too (the video is on YouTube).

Those in search of the lost Grime geist have had a good few months, however, with the arrival of grimetapes.com. Launched by fan and Liverpool native Paul Lynch, Grimetapes is a massive free online archive of pirate radio, studio and club sets. The site unearths Grime's golden age – much of which had been gathering dust on old cassettes.

"The idea arose simply because it seemed surreal there was nothing of the kind in existence," says Lynch. "There were very few places to obtain the moments that effectively made Grime – away from the releases and the media exposure, it was on pirate radio that Grime really existed." So Lynch collated his existing MP3s from stations such as Deja Vu FM and Rinse FM, ripped a few taped radio shows to computer, and started putting the word out. "From the idea to the site being up and running was no more than two months."

Some of the most impressive hauls of tapes have come from inside the scene. "DJ Spooky from Slew Dem turned up outside Hackney Empire with a black plastic bag of 60 tapes. There's probably 300 to 350 sets on the site at the moment, I have about 50 in the flat, around another 200 on a promise, plus we've got a few DJs passing me sets that they've never put up."

With radio hiss and ropey sound quality, these sets provide a window into another world, with time and place only fixed by random snatches of weather reports as the dial is retuned, or MCs chatting about the weekend's football. And then there are the dubplates that never got released, the numerous talents that never put out so much as a single track. "Some of the tapes aren't rare at all," Lynch explains, "but then you've got Dizzee spitting with Nasty Crew on Deja Vu [FM] in 2000, where they're literally introducing him in what could possibly be his first set, that sort of stuff is priceless."

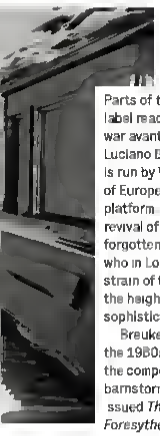
Another new addition to the archive is an undated radio set circa 2003 featuring Wiley and Dizzee Rascal, Grime's godfather and its errant son, spitting over DJ Slimzee's devastating dubplate selection. The set is superior to most of the studio recordings by either MC, and you can't help but feel that the likes of the National Sound Archive or the Arts Council should be involved with the Grimetapes project – archiving the best work of some of the decade's most exciting musicians.

Meanwhile, some of Grimetapes' best moments come from those transient producers or MCs who appeared from nowhere, created or destroyed one beat, and vanished forever. In Essentials' 10 May 2004 Deja Vu FM set, an unknown South London MC called Pepper pops up, delivering just 30 seconds of furious lyrics to howls of hype in the background: *"Pretty meon with a 16 I split spleens/I'll slash you in half like a TV splitscreen/Spit clean just ta let you know I'm rinsing/Then I'm gone."* In the blink of an eye the next MC comes in, and like Pepper says, he's gone.

Dan Hancox ☐ grimetapes.com

Jamie James Medina (Skepta), Val Wilmer Collection (Foresythe)

Reginald Foresythe
New Music master



Parts of the catalogue of the Dutch Bvhaast label read like a roll-call of Europe's post-war avant garde: Iannis Xenakis, Luc Ferrari, Luciano Berio, Bruno Maderna. And the label is run by Willem Breuker, one of the pioneers of European improvised music. An unlikely platform, then, from which to launch a revival of the music of Reginald Foresythe, a forgotten, mixed race pianist and composer who in London in the 1930s developed a strain of through-composed jazz that was the height of progressive, metropolitan sophistication.

Breuker first heard Foresythe's music in the 1980s, and soon began incorporating the compositions into the repertoire of his barnstorming Kollektief. Now Bvhaast has issued *The New Music Of Reginald Foresythe*, which compiles recordings by Foresythe's New Music Orchestra with versions of his works by Louis Armstrong, Fats Waller, Earl Hines. "It sounded so contemporary," says Breuker, explaining what drew him to Foresythe's music. "It was full of new ideas and you could hear immediately that a very special independent mind was doing this with great dedication. It was very human and open music."

The idiosyncratic titles of Foresythe's compositions hint at the music's originality: "Angry Jungle", "Garden Of Weed", "B.t." "A Hymn To Darkness", "The Autocrat Before Breakfast". The pieces themselves are marked by unusual voicings, strange chords and harmonies, and rhythms that move methodically, rather than swing in the fashion of the big band jazz of the day. "The complete originality of his pieces make me perform his music," says Breuker.

The release of the Bvhaast CD was partly facilitated by the work of the British jazz historian Val Wilmer, who has conducted extensive research into Foresythe's life, and contributes sleevenotes to the CD. Wilmer hints at Foresythe's outsider status, partly a consequence of his mixed race origins, but he counted the likes of Duke Ellington and DW Griffiths among his associates, and for a period in the 1930s was a figure in both London cafe society and the New York jazz world. By the 1950s, his unique brand of composed jazz was out of favour. He died in obscurity in 1958.

"During the 80s I tried to find more recordings by Foresythe, but he was a completely unknown person," concludes Breuker. "I found it very strange that no recordings were available, even in England. So I decided to bring him back and honour a great British musician." **Tony Herrington** ☐
The New Music Of Reginald Foresythe is out now on Bvhaast.

Parts of Goodiepal's *Mort Aux Vaches Ekstra Extra*

Goodiepal
Free radical

Kristian Vester is at war. Extreme? Perhaps. But in his world, ideological fevers are running high. This eccentric Danish musician also known as Gaeoudjipari van den Dobbelsteen (aka Mainpal Inv, aka Goodiepal) claims he has even been physically attacked as a consequence. "This year I have been attacked three times on the streets. Two times just for the fun, I guess, but one time for my musical viewpoints," he shrugs.

With a comic book beard and enigmatic double life (his Jekyll made music for Nokia, while his Hyde makes extremely limited-run exquisite music 'objects'), Gaeoudjipari is used to confounding audience expectations – previously he has handcrafted mechanical whistling birds and devised an elaborate musical game involving miniature planets. But now he is on a campaign to alert us all to the fact that electronic music is stagnating and losing its way, its utopian ideals in shreds. Gaeoudjipari believes we're endangering our creative impulses by allowing computers to impose their relentlessly logical processes on us. His latest 'release' – *Mort Aux Vaches Ekstra Extra* – forms part of his arsenal of weaponry against "stupidity in computer and media art in general".

"Computer music today is almost like a video game," he expands. "You boot up your machine and accept everything it does. And just like a game of *Tekken*, most people doing it have no idea why they are carrying it out. You might as well just play your Wii." His answer? A new programme of 'radical computer music' that will rip down the current hegemony of conventional electronic sequencing and replace it with something more organic.

He describes *Mort Aux Vaches Ekstra Extra* as "a school book for the autonomic study of radical computer music". It includes a hardback book half-filled with oblique instructions and diagrams in 'Indo-Scandinavian', alongside die-cut vinyl discs (some playing inside out and backwards) shaped into hearts, teardrops and cars. "The idea is very simple really. It's a composition between *you* and *me*. I only made half of it and you have to make the other half."

The release follows Gaeoudjipari's messy departure from his lecturing job at the the Danish Institute for Electroacoustic Music in Aarhus after he introduced his ideas of 'radical computer music' to the students in his charge. It probably didn't help that he subsequently remixed a track by Aarhus group Under Byen, on which he which named the 'assholes' he had a problem with.

But as he explains it, "I had 12 composition students who I was personally responsible for giving an up-to-date music education to as well as a so-called artistic career. And it would simply be a lie if I told them to do the same stuff we did in the 90s. Here we were with more or less every hero from the 90s going 'buhh'... Otto Luening in a disco mix, Luciano Berio all gone, Michel Waisvisz dead, Wolfgang Voigt as pin-up figure and Kit Clayton back in art school... There was and is no future in that. Learn, build on top and make the next move."

To this end, Goodiepal believes that his ideas represent a bright new future. "If we draw a line from Stravinsky's *Petrushka* over Raymond Scott's decision to build an electronic music studio all the way down to Kraftwerk's Mensch machine, and lend it on Underground Resistance's *Electronic Warfare*, which states 'DO NOT ALLOW YOURSELF TO BE PROGRAMMED', my musical alternative and activities are the next logical step." **Susanna Glaser** ☐
Mort Aux Vaches Ekstra Extra is available from smallfish.co.uk. Goodiepal delivers a lecture as part of the *Mort Aux Vaches* project at Colchester Arts Centre on 6 December. myspace.com/gaeoudjiparivandendobbelsteen

Noodles

By Joe Muggs

"People always ask me what so-and-so tune is 'about', what I meant by it, what I was on, all that sort of thing, and I tell them: 'That one was made on chicken and chips on a Thursday afternoon with a cold.' It's just another day in the studio, going in with a sack of records to sample, coming out with a tune. It's up to you to decide how you feel about the track or where it fits, to me it's just a matter of making stuff, of getting the idea out there then on to the next one."

Steven Jude, or Noodles as he has been known since his teens, doesn't discuss his music in the abstract. Sitting alongside his wife (and business partner) in a South East London fish and chip restaurant, he listens with wry amusement to my questions about genre shifts, musical moods and social significance in rave, Jungle, UK Garage and dubstep – all of which he has occupied pivotal positions within – then responds to each one not with analysis but with an anecdote.

It's clear he understands perfectly well the musical, cultural and emotional importance that others attach to his work, particularly as Groove Chronicles, which, from the mid-1990s, ruthlessly pared down US House/R&B rhythms and vocals in combination with Detroit Techno futurism and the controlled aggression and bass weight of UK rave. But Jude doesn't choose to interpret his work at all, instead returning again and again to "how we operate on the day-to-day", to his career's existence as a conglomeration of meetings with key individuals, moments on the dancefloor, and above all else, individual transactions in the buying, selling and sampling of vinyl.

"Stone Cold" is the Groove Chronicles track most often cited as a formative influence by the dubstep generation – notably by Burial – but for Jude it was just "another day in the studio" with his engineer El-B (later of Ghost Productions, and soon to be the subject of the projected *Roots Of El-B* retrospective on Tempa). "We had a beat, and we had the vocal by [he coughs] Aaliyah's sick long-lost sister, but it was just a bit jazzy and a bit boring. So I went 'how can we rough this up a bit?', and looked around the studio, and there in front of me was Reese, "Just Another Chance", so I took it and I stole – creatively stole – the bass from it, crackling vinyl and all. Not because it was 'the Reese bass', or it'd been on Jungle tunes, just because it was there in front of me when I needed a rougher sound."

With each story, Jude's hands move or gesture towards imaginary records on counters and wall-racks, because his life since the age of 17, when he attended his first Acid House raves, has been lived behind record shop counters. From selling records at stalls in legendary Acid and rave clubs Land Of Oz and Rage, through shops like Mash, Zoom, Unity and Release The Groove...he met and befriended key figures, from US House sisters Tony Humphries and Junior Vasquez to Junglists Mickey Finn and Lemon D, exchanging both inspiration and records with each one. "UK Garage was never like, 'We're making a new style today'," he insists. "It was just like, each person you meet you get an idea off, or each record that comes in the shop you hear a shuffle pattern or the energy in a hi-hat's EQing, and go, 'Oh, I'm stealing that!'"

In 2003, with Grime and dubstep squeezing out the R&B influence in UK Garage, he put Groove Chronicles on hold, producing tracks only for his own DJ sets, which were often alongside his Berlin friends Jazzanova (who, true to form, he befriended after selling them a copy of his own remix of pop-soul outfit Damage). He doesn't like dubstep as such. "I went to the first FWD>> [club], cos I knew Sarah Lockhart [aka Sarah Souljah, promoter and lynchpin of Ammunition/Tempa Records] from Garage clubs, but to me it was just a load of boys hopping on one leg like a Jungle rave. It was good production, nice if you're smoking, but not enough going on – and I didn't get where the dub was. Dub to me is Shaka..." And he is diverted again into another anecdote, about the time he was "round Wookie's dad's place" and Jah Shaka unexpectedly sold him and Mickey Finn some shoes.

Despite his indifference to most dubstep, Jude is happy with his status as an elder statesman of the sound, and, adapting his record salesman's skills for the download era, has signed a slew of new artists to his relaunched, predominantly digital DPR (DAT Pressure Recordings) label – which he is also using to open up his own back catalogue, and to relaunch the career of reclusive UK Garage pioneer Steve Gurley. "The new breed are less stuck in a formula," he says, "and I'm mentoring them to make them realise that they don't need to make predictable dubstep but can just make stuff too."

With DPR artists such as British Columbia's Daega Sound, South London pirate DJ M2J and particularly English-Italian multi-instrumentalist Spuek following this credo, Jude's fellow Garage explorers Zed Bias, Wookie, Benny Ill, El-B and Dris Jay also capitalising on their near-deification by the dubstep scene, and a spaced-out future Garage indebted to Groove Chronicles emerging as a key sound of 2008 thanks to producers such as Martyn and Ramadanman, Jude's contribution to music is as important as it's been in a decade. But to him, every day remains "just another day in the studio", and his dedication to genre boundary-dissolving is tempered by the pragmatism of the 'rave geezer'. "I won't stick to a style," he says, "and I encourage my artists not to, because you've got to be flexible to make money in this game, but mainly because getting tied to a genre is boring." ❑

dprthinkmusic.com

Groove

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Graveyards

By David Keenan

Graveyards left to right: John Olson, Hans Buetow, Ben Hall

Michigan's Graveyards, based around the core trio of saxophonist John Olson (who also plays in Wolf Eyes), percussionist Ben 'Hell' Hall and cellist Hans 'Bunny' Buetow, have formulated a rigorous reimagining of free jazz that looks to noise music for interactive and structural models, while factoring in aspects of lower case improvisation, electronic drone and 20thcentury classical modes. While the connection to Wolf Eyes would suggest their music might be a wall-destroying force, it's actually more reflective and consciously formulated, with as much emphasis on exact placement of notes and the organisational use of silence as there is on generating maximum textural confusion. "Sound choices-wise, being affiliated more with noise than improv or free jazz allows us a lot of wiggle room in terms of what we want to bring," Ben Hall admits. "I don't feel like those other audiences are necessarily open to other shit. At a noise gig you could ostensibly have a folk dude, a drone group, synth, harsh noise, psych and free jazz, and everybody pretty much hangs for everything. That would not happen at some staid improv gig, no way."

Hall and Buetow locate the source of their inspiration in classical chamber music more than free jazz, citing Bartók's six string quartets and Morton Feldman's *String Quartet No 2* alongside Bill Orcutt's landmark 1999 recording *Berlin Abbozzi*. Hall is quick to emphasise their commitment to constructive, formal gambits, as opposed to what he sees as the 'anti-music' techniques of the various minimalists with whom they share a superficial interest in magnifying single gestures. Olson's approach is grounded more in praxis than theory. "Well, I gotta say, Ben and Hans know a lot about theory and such," he says, "especially serialism and European highbrow stuff. But the minimalism from my standpoint comes from a brutal tour overseas 'on foot' where we kept losing and breaking equipment daily, so we had to learn in front of people how to make more with less or say more with less. There was one gig where Nate [Young, of Wolf Eyes] had a mic and a beer can."

On recordings like *Esprit De Corpse* or *Bare Those Excellent Teeth*, both of which were released on Hall and Buetow's Brokenresearch imprint, the combination of slow cello, fizzing percussion and long arcs of single-note sax conspire to birth something that sounds fully composed and with roots deep in abstract 20thcentury thought. But it's not all about holding back. Across the series of *Endings* recordings released by Olson's American Tapes, the trio trade in aggressively reconstituted Fire Music euphonics.

"Every once in a while we go big if the space calls for it, but it is rare, and I think sometimes when we do it's because we've been so intensely focused on gesture and nuance that sometimes we just have to burn all of that out to renew," Hall admits. "And as Don Dietrich of Borbetomagus said to me: 'It can't be that fun to try and get a drum head to resonate when you can just set an audience on fire.' I think it's like tai chi and kung fu. Tai chi is kung fu slowed down and kung fu is tai chi sped up. Same shit."

Although active since 1998, the group has gone through two distinct phases, with the more focused post-2005 incarnation replacing the more selfconsciously 'free' quartets and quintets that existed between 1998 and 2000. "With the first group we were fucking with graphic scores, shortwave, lots of multi-instrumentalism, homemade shit, contact mics," Hall says. "When we reformed in 2005, Hans and I had some really concretised ideas about what we wanted to do and where we wanted to be musically, and we were both extremely turned off by any of the mediocre energy music, fumbling improv, shitty out-jazz played by technicians, and just lame-ass post-20th century classical that had no gravitas."

Graveyards have issued over 50 cassettes, LPs and CD-Rs, most of which are drawn from live shows or regular weekly 'rehearsals', and though at first Hall was appalled by the crude bootlegged and home-burned approach of much of the Michigan underground to releasing and documenting work, he has come to see it as a vital factor in the group's evolution.

"This is something I really had to warm up to when we started playing together again after the first Gods Of Tundra CD-R [2005's *The Galaxy Being*] came out," Hall relates. "It sounded like a group recorded with a handheld with dying batteries, which is what it was. Then Heath Moreland [Fag Tapes] showed up at a gig, recorded us and now we're on one of his Super Street tapes? I mean the concept that someone would boot something, put it out and that I would be mellow about it, fuck that. But Hans and I mention this all of the time to our 'straight' music friends, that what it ultimately did was remove the preciousness of the thing. I think the focus on consistent and constant publication has helped us to move through ideas at a much faster speed, because we can process without every recording standing as a benchmark that we have to go into the studio to record and really hope it turns out just so. I think it stands to defeat the argument that some folks make about limited shit being somehow market based and not pro-idea sharing. I just think, who really wants to hear everything I say?"

Earlier this year Graveyards played the No Fun noise fest in New York and by all accounts their hypnotic, slow motion set was one of the weekend's highlights. "Overall everyone seemed to like it," Hall recalls. "Really interested, lots of questions. And I think it serves as a bit of a tonic with a No Fun-type crowd. I mean, how many tough guys turning knobs can an audience reasonably be expected to watch? There are only so many Black Metal T-shirts to go around." □

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ZAK RILES
self titled CD
Zak Riles is a songwriter and multi-instrumentalist in the Important band Grails (as well as M Ward's band). His creative contributions to the group are immeasurable and can be heard clearly on this self titled debut solo outing. In fact some of the pieces on this solo record have been reinterpreted into Grails favorites.

RISIL
Non Meters, Vol 1 CD/LP
Risil is a collective of musicians that are all somehow connected to each other in some form or fashion. Risil's membership includes Guillermo Herren (Prefuse 73/Savath & Savalas), Zach Hill (Hella), Tyondai Braxton (Battles), John McEntire (Tortoise), Alejandra Deheza (School Of Seven Bells), Eva Puyuelo Muns (Savath & Savalas). [illegible]

SLOMO
The Bog CD
The Bog is the 2nd full-length release from Slomo, honing down the ritual chatter of their first album The Creep (2005) into a more cumbersome and laden effort, ever heading downwards into the Northern Underworld upon slurries of unsignposted mung.

AIDAN BAKER
I Too, Wish To Be Absorbed 2CD
Aidan Baker's I Wish Too, To Be Absorbed is a 2 disc compilation of tracks from various out-of-print limited edition releases spanning the last 10 years of Baker's output, ranging from his very first release to material that was featured on the soundtrack to a book of his poetry. Aidan Baker is, perhaps, best known as half of the duo Nadja.

NADJA/AIDAN BAKER/LEAH BUCKAREFF
Trinitarian LP
Trinitarian represents an attempt to break down the essence of Nadja by offering a solo track from each of its two members plus one Nadja composition: two stripped down ambient pieces featuring single instruments (guitar and bass, respectively) to a full Nadja composition. First 100 mailorder copies get white vinyl.

LARSEN
LLL LP
Selected live recordings of the Italian minimalist instrumental rock group Larsen. Limited edition of 500 teaser for the new Larsen full length coming soon on Important Records. Packaged in a deluxe 4 color screen printed jacket.

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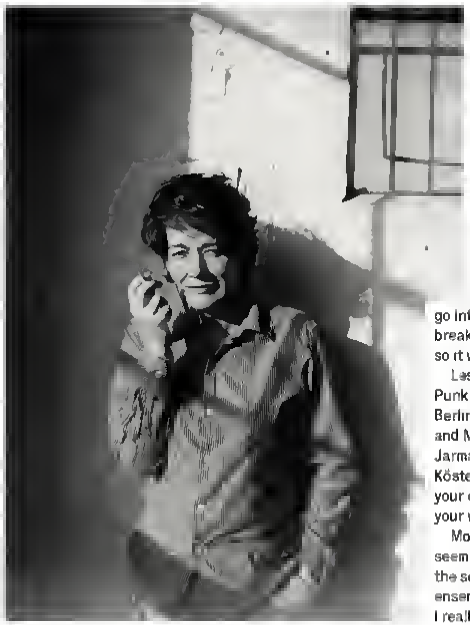
Bettina Köster

By Val Phoenix



Waveform

"You can see the waves in music, like the late 70s to early 80s, then came the trough of the late 80s, then it picked up a little bit in the 90s — it got a little bit more interesting again. Now we are, I think, in a very similar time to the late 70s, when the whole punk thing came out. Because what did we have then? A disgusting music industry, bands that were horrible. The record industry was not doing well at that time. Same as now."

Having spent almost 30 years in and around music, Bettina Köster has a long view of the industry. And as a qualified chartist, she also has the credentials for an analysis. Assessing the current global financial turmoil, she concludes, "We are in front of total mayhem and chaos. Which — [she pauses and smiles] I love. Because it's a time where things get more interesting again."

The Köster CV is characterised by such restlessness and adventure. A native of North Rhine-Westphalia, Germany, she first made her name in the late 1970s and early 80s in the Berlin post-punk groups Mania D and Malaria!. Moving to New York in 1983, she became disillusioned with the music industry and worked on Wall Street as a market analyst. Although she didn't release anything for almost two decades, she made music for herself, but then erased it. "Not everything is made to be kept forever," she explains. Other activities included crawling through the jungles of Burma for a documentary and writing a screenplay for an award-winning short film.

Now she is enjoying the autonomy of making her first solo record, *Queen Of Noise*. "Since this album is all about me, myself and I, I thought, I can go back to me, myself and my influences," she explains, listing them as David Bowie, Roxy Music and Lou Reed.

While *Autonervous*, a dissonant saxophone project from 2006, was characterised by frantic beats, *Queen Of Noise* pulses with sinister, minimal electro, which spirals into far-flung directions. One notable feature is her voice. Those who have heard nothing since her Malaria! days will be startled by how it has opened into a rich baritone, aided by her prodigious nicotine intake. When she growls *"Welcome to Regina's Diner"* on the opening track, it's as threatening as the spider to the fly.

Lyrically, she's always been concerned with the tumult of emotions and relationships, a preoccupation that continues on the new record. "Procession" features the lines, *"You don't talk much of love/You just do"*. Musing on the lyrics, she explains, "Basically, I think when we sing a song, it's like affirmations. The text has been done over and over and over again, so I think, therefore, this sound creates reality or matter, kind of. So, I think that's what the songs are about."

While she recorded the album at home, she felt she didn't have the resources to mix it, and having made one attempt in Berlin, brought in producers Alexander Nefzger and Bernhard Moshammer to finish the album in Vienna, where she spends much of her time.

The record's title comes from a compliment bestowed by John Peel on Mania D, whose one and only single "Track 4" was a Peel favourite in 1980. "He would call us his queens of noise. So I'm entitled to use that name, at least according to John Peel," she says with a chuckle.

Fired by punk ideals, Mania D and Malaria! sought to break the rules. All-women groups in a male-dominated scene, they created their own world, provocatively mixing sexuality with Weimar Republic and military imagery. Koster, who sang and played sax, recalls, "The music we wanted to do was supposed to go into the system on an emotional or cellular level, breaking up patterns by just inducing certain sounds so it was experimentation."

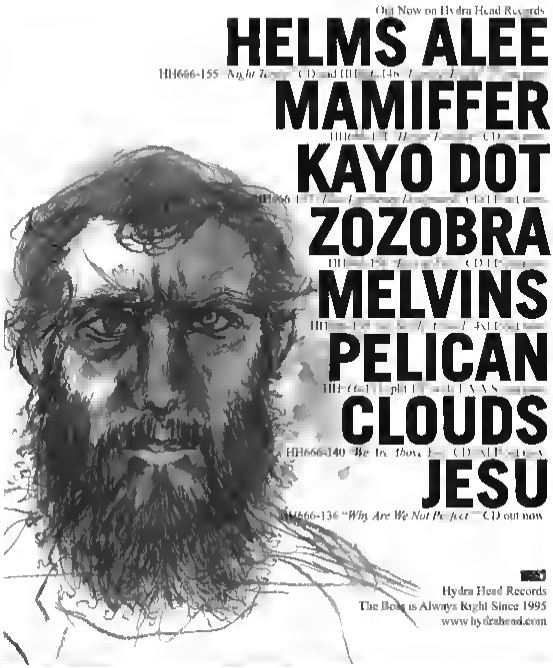
Last summer Vienna hosted an exhibition called Punk: No One Is Innocent, comparing the scenes in Berlin, London and New York. So it was that Mania D and Malaria! rubbed shoulders with Suicide and Derek Jarman. "Does punk really belong in a museum?" Köster grouses. "Punk, to me, at least, means you find your own way. You want to educate yourself, you find your way how to do it, educate yourself through life."

Moving from boho Kreuzberg to Wall Street may seem an odd leap, especially for one who sported the socialist red carnation as part of her onstage ensemble, but Koster explains her logic. "I thought I really have to separate making music from making money. I do music to do music, and to make money, where's money to be found? Oh, in a bank. OK, then I go work in a bank. And then I became an analyst." This provided unexpected benefits. "So I studied certain wave theories and I found that very interesting, because also it's a graphic reflection of fear and greed. And it's not just markets that are ruled by fear and greed. You can actually apply it to anything."

Currently living in Sieti, Italy, Köster is enjoying being by the sea but continues to seek diversions. She spent the winter of 2007 on the slopes in Austria working as a ski instructor. Her knees are still aching from the exertion, but she is pleased to have done it. "One thing that I really blame my mother for is that I was born in the flatlands and not in the mountains, that I wasn't born on skis. So, finally, I took so many skiing lessons that, last year, I said to my ski instructor, 'I wanna make my money back now', and so I got hired as a ski instructor. Life-long dream come true." ☐ *Queen Of Noise* will be released in early 2009 on Fraulein/Asinella. The album is currently available direct from myspace.com/bettinakoster

theories

David Fischer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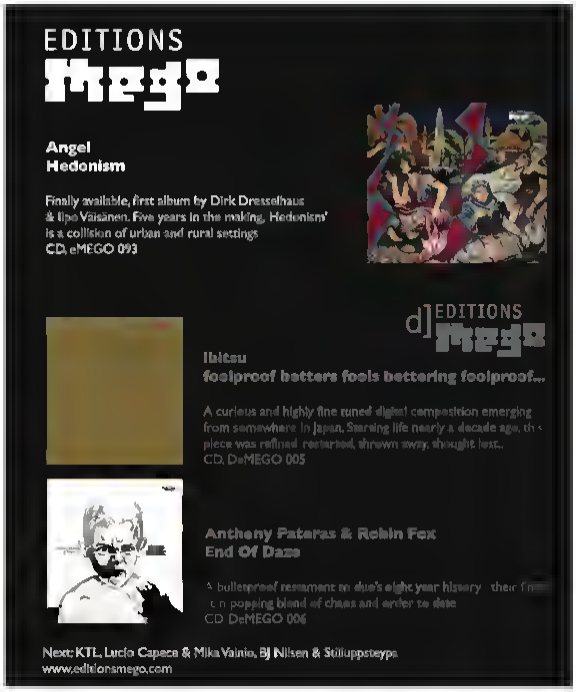
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Toronto

From suicide spots to broadminded churches, **Daniel Nielson** tunes in to the hidden sounds of a Canadian city

Underneath the arches: the Extermination Music Night

The night begins where so many lives have ended: the bottom of Toronto's Prince Edward Viaduct. Metro carriages clatter overhead, their passengers unaware that the tenth Extermination Music Night is about to take shape below them. The 200 or so attendees wait patiently, pondering the trains, the viaduct and its gruesome history, highlighted by a 'Hanging Museum' by artists Vanessa Rieger, Maryanne Casasanta and Sarah Kilpack. The cops haven't arrived yet.

"400-plus people ended their lives by jumping off it before they constructed its suicide barrier called the Luminous Veil," Daniel Vila, one of the organisers, tells me. "To have an event at the point of impact is to inhabit an extremely charged space, a kind of spirit-filled netherworld."

The Extermination Music Night (EMN) is part of a growing experimental music scene in Toronto that has taken to the streets, to disused industrial sites, residential houses and public parks for its fruition. While Toronto's traditional arts spaces are far from conservative, this movement is re-examining artistic relationships with the city's environment, while in turn absorbing its urbanity.

"I think over the years experimental art in Toronto has moved beyond its traditional base," EMN's co-conspirator Matt McDonough adds. "We are especially interested in the use and perception of public spaces. But also the 'questing' aspect in finding the location, a certain amount of humour, a certain bit of mystery and apprehension."

"This particular location is a response to the culture of barrier," Daniel Vila continues. "Although the Luminous Veil continues to exist and to function, the event takes place in the very space deemed inaccessible by it, which works as a metaphor for the entire EMN project."

It is exactly the kind of urban environment and situational melding that appeals to the night's first performer Joda Clement, an ambient recordist and arranger. For his 2006 piece *Cherry Beach Project* (reviewed in *The Wire* 278) Clément documented two nights in abandoned and toxic industrial ruins, frequented by Toronto's underclass and corrupt cops. "My recordings attempt to blur the distinction between electronic, acoustic and ambient sources," Clément announces. "I combine nondescript omnipresent noises that surround us with instrumental and vocal recordings to create a landscape of sounds that unites the properties of both musical and everyday contexts."

Tonight Clement has miked the viaduct and fed the result through itself. The vibrations of the bridge's traffic are manipulated, squeezed through reverb and amplified, conjoining with the continuous hum of the nearby highway and the trains' regular and overwhelming rattles overhead. This synthesis and processing of the natural city ambience mesmerises the audience, who listen intently not only to Clément's production but to the independent hubbub of life.

I compare and contrast to another entirely situational aural experience a week earlier. It is Labour Day weekend in Canada. The afternoon sun burns my neck as I join a menagerie of citizens from the city's 150 cultures on the ferry to Toronto Island, less than a mile from the base of the city's distinctive skyline. I have come to the island to join a weekly Soundwalk led by Nadene Theriault-Copeland, the managing director of New Adventures In Sound Art (NAISA), a non-profit organisation dedicated to the dissemination of new and experimental sound art.

Thériault-Copeland instructs me to close my eyes and listen. I hear the rhythmic swoosh of my shoes brushing across the grass, seagulls echoing the screech of children: the howl of an F18 jet from a nearby airshow, dozens of languages, each singing a mysterious song. "There are three ways we listen," she tells me. "We can hear the interaction of sounds about us, we can seek out a symphony of sounds, or focus on spatial awareness."

I hear a ferry's horn. Another jet. And then something unrecognisable. As I look up I see four static exercise bicycles being enthusiastically pedalled by four children, each facing one of the cardinal points. It is Barry Prophet's gaudily painted Synthecycletron, a semi-permanent piece commissioned by NAISA for the summer-long Sound Travels festival. Electrical impulses from its central hub power synthesizers. As the pedals go round, the north and south facing cycles clitter and clatter, a punctuated cadence of thumb piano-like notes. The east and west facing cycles provide a more rhythmic meter. As the riders tire, the sounds grind to a halt, until another family takes up the baton, and pedal away, giggling.

"We are trying to develop a cross-fertilisation of different media," says NAISA's artistic director Darren Copeland. Among the festival pieces are 'soundportraits' from Danish sound artist Jørgen Teller, racks of audio greeting cards that hold manipulated field recordings, and an insightful series of soundscape documentaries from around the world.

NAISA's adopted home is the 125 year old church of St Andrew-by-the-Lake. In another church, I meet Jonny Dovercourt, the artistic director of Toronto's hugely influential Music Gallery, a 30 year old centre for contemporary music. "The Music Gallery was traditionally a centre of composed music, but the Avant series attempts to bring all the different musical communities together." On any given weekend the Music Gallery could be hosting experimental jazz from the well-known duo Feuermusik, 'concrete rockabilly' from Slim Twig, or all manner of collaborations. This October's annual Avant included performances from The Sun Ra Arkestra and Pram, as well Canadian sound artist Tim Hecker. "What I think is unique about Toronto is how connected musicians are," Dovercourt says. "Here we don't care about the dogmatic aspect. There is risk taking everywhere in this city."

This becomes starkly apparent back under the Prince Edward Viaduct. Canalile, a new project led by Jeremy Strachan of Feuermusik, punctures the space with jagged horn blasts, capitalising on the unique acoustics and ambient noise. It is both challenging and dizzyingly disorientating.

The police arrive during a set by sax and skins duo Steve Baczkowski and Rob Gordon. The night comes to a premature end. I head back down the dark path, lit only by carefully placed luminous wristbands. The noise of the trains fades into the hum of the motorway, sirens, horns, slamming doors and dogs barking. The symphony of the city continues. ☐

Daniel Nielson

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To Whom It May Concern.

I have had the pleasure of having Kristian Vester as a colleague on the teaching staff of the Royal Academy of Music in Aarhus from 2004 to 2008. During this period Kristian Vester has taught classes in *The History of Electronic Music, Aesthetics of Electronic Music* and *Electronic Music Composition and Production*. I found Kristian Vester to be a dedicated and enthusiastic teacher who focuses on creativity and who fearlessly seeks out new and original approaches to artistic subjects. He was well-liked by the students and there always seemed to be countless exciting events and projects taking place around him. He has an impressive knowledge of current trends in electronic music and contemporary culture in general and a deep understanding of the concepts and paradoxes associated with this quickly changing field.

Please feel free to contact me as a reference.

Sincerely,

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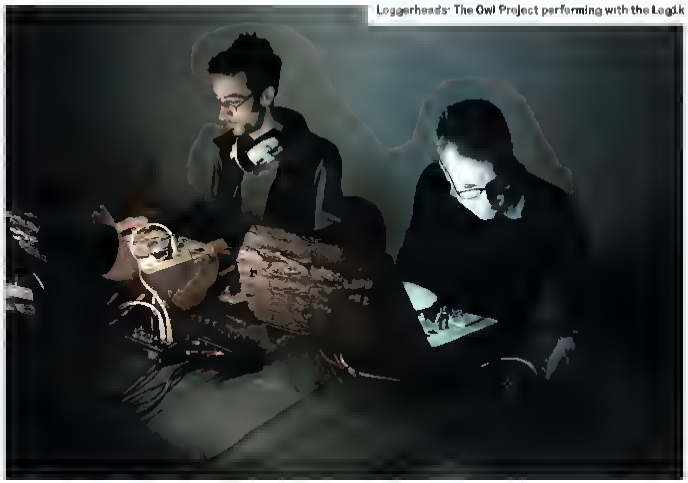
January 8, 2004

To Whom it May Concern

This Letter confirms that Kristian Vester lectured at Princeton University on November 19, 2003

Nathan Michel
Graduate Composition Fellow, Princeton University


Loggerheads: The Owl Project performing with the Log1k

British woodwork artists
The Owl Project
fabricate logger-rhythms and timber timbres.
By Anne Hilde Neset

"Sitting around a fire with a Casio SK1, we captured the hoots of some owls and played the recordings back to them. The owls heard the calls and swooped down to see what was happening and The Owl Project was born," says Simon Blackmore, who, with Steven Symons and Antony Hall, is one third of The Owl Project. In the ten years since that incident, the artist/musician/programmer/woodworking trio have continued to amalgamate organic materials and electronics in their eccentric, self-built wooden musical instruments: the iLog, Sound Lathe, Log1K and mLog. By embedding circuit boards in bits of tree, they are able to use the lo-tech timber instruments for live performance, producing a post-Pan Sonic upper case electronica which fills the sound field with Morse code melody and ring modulator murmur.

Hailing from Manchester, all three have an educational background in fine art, creative technology, sound and sculpture, and they share programming, electronics and carpentry skills. "We like wood because it is so easy to find and relatively simple to work with. Wood is interesting as it can also be read in so many ways: it can combine the seriousness of high modernism and cartoon humour," they explain in a collectively signed email. Working with wood also questions the ephemeral nature of commercially produced gadgets. "As consumers of technology, we are interested in how much of it you can make yourself. This expands across working with electronics, writing software and working with wood. In a way it's a rejection of the idea that you have to buy into a new gadget or technology to be creative. Of course we are buying these things all the time, but a new laptop or sequencer can be too full of possibilities. There is something quite liberating about working with a homemade instrument with extreme limitations."

The Log1k is a halved log, hinged to resemble a laptop. "The keypad is replaced by a rotating disc that triggers various lo-fi samplers and other audio circuits to create a mass of chaotic rhythms," they explain. "The audio circuits themselves can be really simple, like a battery and a switch connected straight to a mixer, so it just sends a voltage straight to the speaker. When we first made the Log1ks, the 'screens' were fitted with 240 volt bulbs, which was a little dangerous, but made a fantastic sound. In the past this use of raw electricity has caused all sorts of problems: we once set fire to some speakers in a working men's club in Cardiff."

The iLogs, meanwhile, are a whole series of sympathetic instruments. The iLog Rustle lets you 'rustle' sound by playing it back and slowing it down. The iLog Signal is a series of noise generators, while the iLog Photosynthesizer "converts light into sound through 'amplitude modulation'. This instrument allows you to listen to your bike lights, laptop screen, candles and anything else that emits light." Other gadgets include the saw-controlled oscillators Stump and Base Stump, an embedded contact mic resonating in the hollowed-out Contact Log, and Sticks, "two short coppiced wooden sticks that you hit together to send binary data to an audio sequencer."

Their most elaborate instrument to date is the Sound Lathe, a large pedal-powered instrument where the rotating spindles produce not only a symphony of beats and bleeps, but woodchips and sawdust to boot. "Unlike many electronic instruments, the Sound Lathe produces a unique wooden object at the end of each performance," they deadpan.

In 2007 the Sheffield Lovebytes Festival commissioned The Owl Project to make a piece of sonic furniture. The unit, helped by their mentor, woodworking tutor Mike Abbott ("the Brian Eno of pole lathing" they call him), used elements carved by the Sound Lathe, constructed a chair, and implanted it with the audio that was produced during its making. "It's really a very elaborate variation of Robert Morris's *Box With The Sound Of Its Own Making*," they comment. Morris's influential 1961 minimalist artwork is a walnut box containing a three hour tape recording of its own construction sealed inside, a process piece which fascinated John Cage at the time.

Presently, The Owl Project function as an art project and live ensemble, mainly performing in gallery settings, but they are currently discussing making a record. The challenge is how to make it fully capture what they do. "Released audio loses any context other than its own sound," the trio comment. They are currently working with Leafcutter John, Kaffe Matthews and Thor Magnusson (IXI software) to develop a handheld device named mLog, which can aid the process of playing live with a computer.

Whether to make the instruments available for sale is the object of constant discussion within the group. "There is definitely a demand, but we want the iLog to remain handmade, and making it affordable without mechanising some of the processes is a challenge. The Log1ks and iLogs really grew out of the idea of making alternatives to mass produced objects, so making a lot of them and selling them has always seemed a little contradictory. As each iLog is different, and fundamentally quite difficult to make, the labour required to make one is greatly at odds with the production of other manufactured instruments. In a sense, the concept of the iLog stands in opposition to the idea of mass production: it is the difference between growing and eating your own vegetables and going to the supermarket and buying a ready meal. We have had a lot of interest in the iLogs, but decided that we would rather see people make their own variations." ☐ The mLog will be presented at Ding>>Dong, FACT, Liverpool this month; see Out There. owlproject.com

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November 22, 2006

This will confirm that artist, Gaeoudjipari/Goodiepal aka Kristian Vester, performed and gave a lecture at California Institute of the Arts on November 21, 2006

Joann Moorehead
Operations Manager
School of Art
California Institute of the Arts

KUNSTHØGSKOLEN I OSLO

Re: Pari Kristian Bjørn Vester recommendation letter

Vår ref Kris ref 2 Date 18 October 2006

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ST OLAVSGT 32

To whom it may concern

Pari Kristian Bjørn Vester is a great musician, artist and thinker. I have known him for many years and I have consistently been impressed by his many talents. He is one of the most interesting artists coming out of Scandinavia. He is especially proficient in electroacustic music, programming and performance.

He has lectured at universities such as Princeton University and CalArts. I had the plesure of inviting him to lecture at the Oslo Art Academy and he was very inspiring for my students.

He has a great future ahead.

Sincerely

Aaron Bergman
Professor
Head of the Digital Art Department
Oslo National Academy of the Arts

Saksbehandler

Johny Brown at home in London, October 2008

Invisible Jukebox

Each month we play a musician a series of records which they are asked to identify and comment on – with no prior knowledge of what they are about to hear. This month it's the turn of

The Band Of Holy Joy

Tested by **Biba Kopf**. Photography by **Joss McKinley**

Referencing a streetcorner temperance society featured in a Brendan Behan book, the name The Band Of Holy Joy has always carried the promise of a different kind of song. Led by singer, writer and broadcaster Johny Brown, their rollicking, rambunctious, shamelessly wordy and sometimes barely seaworthy music pitches between end of the pier music hall, chanson, punk, shanties, penny dreadful ballads, salty theatre song and other popular, if not exactly pop, forms. Shaped as much by Brecht, Brel and Nina Simone as the punk and Industrial electronics Brown grew up with in North Shields, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, before moving to London in the early 1980s, Holy Joy records such as *Who Snatched The Baby?* (1986) and *Rosemary Smith* (1987) are vivid evocations of a Britain on the periphery, peopled with characters whose lust for life just about sees them through straitened times. Tracks from both are included on *Leaves That Fall In Spring*, a career-spanning retrospective released late last year by Cherry Red.

When they started in 1984, economic circumstance determined the junkshop instrumentation of harmoniums, trashy electronic keyboards, accordion, glockenspiels, trombone and the like of their early line-ups. Since then more than 50 individuals have passed through. "Holy Joy always had a really open policy of people joining and leaving," says Brown. "We never advertised or courted anyone. If you wanted to join, you joined."

The present line-up of Brown, violinist Chris Brierley, guitarist Andy Astle and bassist Paul O'Donell has been expanded to take in Inga Tillere (visuals) and performers Matilda Brooke and Ben Reeves to present a cabaret version of a theatre piece, *Troubled Sleep*, on 5 December, at Chat's Palace in Hackney, East London. This is not Brown's first foray beyond music. He has staged five plays, including *William Burroughs Caught In Possession Of The Rime Of The Ancient Manner* in Glasgow and Paris. The piece was also transformed into an all-night radio drama on Resonance FM, where Brown presents a weekly show, *Mining For Gold*, mixing spoken word, music and improvisation. With Inga Tillere he recently inaugurated a Sunday night web radio show, *Radio Joy* (thebandofholyjoy.co.uk).

The Jukebox took place at Brown's home in Stoke Newington, London.

Crawling Chaos
"Berlin"
From "Sex Machine" 7" (Factory) 1980

Cabaret Voltaire? Crawling Chaos? Thank God. I knew this but I haven't heard it for 25 years. "Sex Machine"? The B side. "Berlin". Wow, can I just listen to it? Excellent. Very Can, isn't it? The voice is very Cabaret Voltaire, a disembodied, Northern downer sort of voice. A lot of their gigs went on in various doss houses around Whitley Bay. They had this attic studio on Front Street in Tynemouth, which is a very quaint road by day and an absolutely violent strip by night. Very psychedelic, Crawling Chaos, in a driving, forceful Seeds- and Can-like manner. I knew Jeff [Crowe] the guitarist really well. Jeff was a real Canhead, and he loved his hallucinogenics.

I don't know how they got a deal with Factory, but the minute they started getting any sort of success they destroyed it. They weren't in it for fame or success or any of those reasons, they were in it to create some serious noise damage, some magic, and get out. They'd either do totally inspired gigs or they'd be completely, nauseatingly bad, and they'd do it on purpose sometimes, just to provoke a reaction. They could be quite stuck up and bratty, but when they got into a groove and got trancey, they could be the best band in the world, better than Can.

Didn't you move down to London with them?

Yes. I'd just split up with a girlfriend and they said, 'We're doing a gig at the Rock Garden in London, do you wanna come down?' I never went home again.

What was the Newcastle scene like in the 1970s?

There's never been a scene in Newcastle, never ever. Newcastle has never been a live city. Newcastle is geared towards alcohol abuse and disco dancing, not live music. There was a punk club in a gay club in Whitley Bay, Gatsby's, and it was the only place we could go. It was fantastic, the same 20 or 30 faces every week, but all of them forming bands or doing fanzines or something. One of the best gigs I ever went to was on my 16th birthday in 1977. Adverts, Penetration and Warsaw at the Guildhall in Newcastle. Penetration are the band I loved and still love. A major influence.

At the other extreme, weren't you once approached to sing in Angelic Upstarts?

Well, I had a punk band, Speed. At the start there was us, Penetration and another band called Raw. Then The Upstarts came along, who were a little more professionally minded. They were run by a hard man, Keith Bell, who once sacked the singer Mensi and came knocking on my door. He said, 'I've sacked Mensi and I want you to sing in The Angelic Upstarts.' I very politely declined.

Didn't Upstarts songs once save your life?

Absolutely. Me and Hacker from Holy Joy were playing a red skinhead rally in Lübeck, West Germany in the late 1990s. We had long hair and were just rolling through Europe playing songs. But the skinheads weren't having it. They were spitting, bottles started flying, and there were all these skinhead girls going, 'Kill! Kill!' We looked at each other and started shaking, wondering what to do. I said, 'Right, we're going to do some Upstarts.' The transformation was immediate, from pure Suicide *23 Minutes Over Brussels*, bottled off, to skinhead worship. We came through with a couple of Upstarts songs, and for that I'll be ever grateful to them.

Brendan Behan
"We're Here Because We're Queer"/"Preab San Ol (Drink Heartly)"
From Sings Irish Folksongs And Ballads (Arran) early 1960s

[Immediately] Brendan Behan? Absolutely beautiful. *"We're here because we're queer because we're queer because we're here."* He's a genius, isn't he? Band Of Holy Joy are preparing this play at the moment called *Troubled Sleep*, which is about the Chelsea Hotel through the different generations, Sid & Nancy, Dylan Thomas, Jackson Pollock, all the artists, and Brendan Behan shines through it, a dark, beautiful, sad, tragic figure. He was like a child, barrelling through life but very bright. Could you get away with that now, being on telly, challenging the government, a real lover of life? Irish music was an influence on us, of course, but not as much as Bertolt Brecht or Jacques Brel or chansons, and not as much as things like The Cabs, and The Pogues, I must say.

The Pogues and Holy Joy were often mentioned in the same breath

I don't know why. The Pogues were 20 times better. I love The Pogues, their first two albums were the best albums ever made. The darkness, the wildness, a really free, wild spirit, very poetic. Shane MacGowan was like Bob Dylan in a way, he just took Irish folk songs and used them as a vessel, really turned them inside out for his own means, like all good songwriters do. And he had the spirit to go with it and the perceptions to articulate the things you couldn't articulate, and which I guess for an earlier generation is what Brendan Behan really did. Plus, at the end of the day both Behan and The Pogues wrote really good drinking songs, songs to get drunk to, to get sad to, go out fighting or go out drinking, to get you into a really good spirit.

Bertolt Brecht
"The Song Of The Inadequacy Of Life"
From The Threepenny Opera (Download) 1928/29

It's from *The Threepenny Opera* and it's "The Ballad Of Immoral Earnings"?

Yes and no. The title translates as "The Song Of The

Inadequacy Of Life". Do you recognise the singer?
Brecht himself? Is this from the time he took over a production himself in the 1920s and did all the singing on it? It's raw. He sings it the way it should be sung, rough, from the streets, like he means it to be. *Threepenny Opera* is a really good story, Macheath [aka Mackie Messer or Mack the Knife] being in with the police officer – it's that eternal thing of the thieves wanting to be middle class and the middle class acting like thieves, and that whole thing about Mack the Knife being a shark when it's the middle class who're the sharks you never see, even as they're tearing off parts of you, but they're so smooth and articulate with it. And that's what he was getting at in *The Threepenny Opera*, and before him John Gay in *The Beggar's Opera*. For Brecht, drama had to be an active process. People shouldn't just sit there in wonder, thinking this is theatre and isn't it all lovely? You've got to hit them and they've got to think 'Whoah, this is bad, and let's do something to change it.' The directness of Brecht's songs and the imagery they evoked had an influence on Holy Joy. We wanted to present our songs in a similar way. We didn't want to follow the mainstream with a guitar/bass/drums line-up. We said, 'Let's rethink this, use what we can.' We didn't have much money at the time so we hit the junkshops, dug out old harmoniums, glockenspiels, but behind that we were listening to a lot of Brecht. We were always searching for good songs wherever they came from. Still do.

***Threepenny Opera*'s scent of Soho filtered into early Holy Joy...**
In journalists' minds... Well, it was just there you know. We were just 21 and anyway. 20 years ago Soho was a different place, there was a lot of hidden shenenigens going on, no media creators, none of the big copy houses. But we were rooted in New Cross [in South East London]. Test Department and [UK comedian] Vic Reeves, they were our peers.

Talking of which...

Test Department
"Statement"
From *The Unacceptable Face Of Freedom* (Some Bizzare) 1986
[As soon as a miner speaks over Test Department's metal percussion and scrapes] Alan Sutcliffe... I'm bang in the middle of reading [David Peace's miners' strike novel] *GB84* at the moment and it's having a big effect. It's weird that I didn't realise how special Test Department were, even though I lived with them, what they were doing, what they meant to those times and what they should mean to these times. Back then I wasn't gung ho about 'Save the miners'. I was quite ambivalent, though I used to get on really well with Alan [a Kent miner who collaborated live and on record with Test Department during the miners' strike] and we used to drink together a lot. Alan was an amazing strong character, who was very militant, very vocal. A really beautiful working class intelligence. The strike was probably the birth of him, because it gave him a chance to articulate himself. He was on the barriers on every picket line, saying his bit, then Test Department gave him another platform.

> "The miners' strike was like civil war. During it I lived with Test Department, and because they were so vocal about it, our phone was tapped, click, click when you picked the phone up"

It was like civil war, the strike, but the media was so strong, that you don't realise until 20 years later how much like civil war it was. I lived with Test Department and we were getting this every day, you know. Leon Brittan, the tricks they used, sending the army in, MI5... Because Test Department were so vocal about it, our phone was tapped, click, click when you picked the phone up. Hearing this now I get quite emotional. I love Test Department and I don't think they get the full credit they're due. They changed music a hell of a lot, you can use metal, you can use samples, you can cut things up... Einstürzende Neubauten were doing their thing, but that was quite rock based based on rock values, but this wasn't. It was the folk music of the time. Test Department were a proper folk band, forward thinking and engaged with the people. Beautiful, primal stuff...

Wasn't Test Department's film maker Brett Turnbull an early member of Holy Joy?
Yes. Brett said, 'Write a few songs', and so I did, on a synthesizer in the house. A lot of the early songs were quite electro. We had an old harmonium and a Vox organ and we just started making music together. It was totally opposite to Test Department, who were in training upstairs being militant. We were downstairs on drugs writing these really weird dirges. It was chalk and cheese.

Test Department were incredibly masculine...
Absolutely, and we were extremely feminine. We were about romance, about a Britain that was fading away, contrasted with a reality that was quite dark. But there was definitely a spirit shared. Test Department were polemic where we were quite poetic, personal, romantic, the way we saw things. But then again, personal is political. They were out on tour with the miners during the strike, and you can't get more personal than people's lives being affected like that.

And where did Vic Reeves fit into all this?
[Laughs] Well, there was lots of cheap housing in New Cross then, lots of squats and housing association houses, and there was Goldsmiths College too. [Test Department's] Angus was top boy at Goldsmiths, so it was mix of squatters, students, genius guys and general misfits. Vic Reeves was a very informed guy, with this art background and he was a really brilliant musician, very much an improvisor, working with people like Steve Beresford way before he made his hit record. The very first music I made when I came to London was with Brett, Vic Reeves and his girlfriend Lucie Russell, and a guy called George on saxophone. We used to do this beautiful free rolling stuff with this cheap and nasty yellow and black plastic Wasp synthesizer. Of course everybody eventually moved away.

Little Annie
"The Good Ship Nasty Queen"
From *Songs From The Coal Mine Canary* (Durtro Jnana) 2006
Is this an Irish singer?
No, it's an American singer.
I haven't got a clue.
It's Little Annie, produced by Antony.
[Slaps himself] Little Annie? I love Little Annie. Band Of Holy Joy were really good friends with her. We did lots of things together, and I'm really happy that she's doing things like this now. Amazing voice. Amazing performer. Amazing lyricist. I love that sense of cabaret, of just presenting your songs, putting on a show.

There have been sporadic attempts to establish new forms of cabaret as an alternative to the rock gig.
It was always forefront in our minds in Holy Joy not to play [standard rock clubs like] The Marquee or the Bull And Gate but to find our own venues and audiences... We sought out totally alien territories. Like playing for the miners at a Kent welfare social club on a Sunday morning, when we had just started and couldn't even play our instruments. Which was a very brave thing to do, looking back, but rather that than trying to get a support slot and work your way up. It was never really about that. It was about creating a sense of occasion. In the early 80s, Richard Strange, with his Cabaret Futura, opened things up. He was coming more from a dada cabaret thing, but what a brilliant idea. I also liked Vic Godard's Club Left at the Wag Club, where he was putting on crooners, poets, Northern soul, a really beautiful mix, and you'd come away with your mind opened a bit, rather than the passive experience of going to a rock gig and having a few pints of lager...

But back to Annie, she was Annie Anxiety with Crass until she transformed into Little Annie, and wow, what a beautiful transformation, reinventing herself as a modern 90s technological cabaret singer working with Adrian Sherwood, using sequencers, and here she is working with Antony, who's got a beautiful androgynous voice. He's the reverse of Annie, an Englishman who went to New York.

Martyn Bates & MJ Harris
"The Cruel Mother"
From *Murder Ballads (Passages)* (Musica Maxima Magnetica) 1997
David Tibet? Nurse With Wound?
No...
But it's very similar, combining drone and folk. Eyeless In Gaza?
Close. It's Martyn Bates with Mick Harris.
This is fantastic. I used to have loads of Eyeless In Gaza. But this is beautiful. I love English music when it is dark. I love the sound of pylons going across fields, and I like the idea of council estates tumbling out onto fields, and ponies going onto streets through villages,

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24 May 2005

To whom it may concern.

This is to confirm that Kristian Vester (Goodiepal) has been employed to develop and produce the complete compositional material and sound work for the Nordic Pavilion at the 2005 World Exposition in Aichi, Japan

This means that all programming, computing, recording, composition and production is handled in house by Kristian Vester (Goodiepal)

Best regards,
Nordic EXPO 2005 Secretariat

John Hansen
Deputy Commissioner General

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Department of Music

November 21, 2003

This is to confirm that Kristian Vester, Goodiepal, gave a lecture in Todd Winkler's Music 186 class on Friday, November 21, 2003.

Brown University
Department of Music
Providence, RI 02912

Mary E. Rego
Financial Assistant

and dirty brokedown caravans, power stations and offshore oil rigs at sea. I like the sense of England being encroached on by industry... I like the sense of a Britain that's vanishing combined with the modern that is encroaching upon it, you know. This is an old English folk song obviously.

How would you distinguish this from neo-folk?

Well, I'm not negative about neo-folk, it's just that it doesn't make my blood flow in the same way... Folk to me is really words and writing about what is going on right now, whereas The Unthank Sisters and the like, it's all a bit twee. It's so easy to pick up a guitar, play a few folk tunes and say it's new folk. But it all seems very William Morris. Morris was this great revolutionary socialist, whose wallpaper now sells at Liberty and gets hung on all suburban walls. Folk music, the danger and the message have gone from it. These folk songs, these melodies are our DNA. This is us. The thing about this track, it's not putting you on, not affecting any position, it just is and it's absolutely beautiful. It transcends time and transcends categories.

Gregory Whitehead with Dan Lander
"Here Comes Everybody (A Radio Litany)"
From *Shake, Rattle, Roll: A Radio Play Manifesto* (New American Radio) 1993

This is very Beat. English?

No, it's American and it's later than Beat.

Is it Tellus? I haven't got a clue but it's beautiful...

It's the American radio artist Gregory Whitehead with Dan Lander.

Can we hear it again? This should be a manifesto for Resonance, which I love. Resonance is what radio should be. This track is very educational, inspirational, very subtle, and it's using the studio very well with cut-ups in the background and stuff. This is what we aspire to do with *Mining For Gold*. We started seven years ago. I had no radio background whatsoever. I just approached Knut Aufermann, one of the early Resonance guys, and begged him to give us a radio show, and he said, 'Johny, what do you know about radio?' And I had to say, 'Nothing, but I love radio and the possibility of radio, and the radio I'm listening to does nothing for me and I went to try and do something.' And he gave us four weeks to see if I could do something and I've hung in broadcasting ever since, and I still love it as much as when we first started. There were times when we were really pushing boundaries and it was fantastic, mixing word, music, improvisation, everything, all channels open, trying to get away from what radio was. We still have our moments.

Myra Davies
'Burroughs' Bunker"
From *Cities And Girls* (Monika) 2008

I absolutely love it but I have no idea who it is.

It's Myra Davies, a Canadian spoken word performer, who often works with Gudrun Gut. Does spoken word offer a repeat listening experience?

Absolutely. You heard it before with Gregory Whitehead, a soundscape cut up and rhythmically organised. I can listen to it over and over. It has that mantra quality, creates its own poetry and that poetry creates its own spell. This too works very well, it's really to the point, a really funny tale, but it's also quite arch. Yet she takes you somewhere – right inside William Burroughs's bunker.

Davies is describing being taken around Burroughs' home by John Giorno, at a guess. Burroughs was also the inspiration for a piece of yours.

The play was *William Burroughs Caught In Possession Of The Rime Of The Ancient Mariner*. Basically it's Burroughs in New York around the time described in Myra's piece here. It's the turn of the 80s. The first wave of yuppiedom is moving in, cleaning up the Bowery and cleaning up the Village, and all the artists are getting pushed out to Brooklyn or whatever. And, getting very piqued at this, Burroughs decides to set out on one last bash, one last literary rail against the world, one last journey into the darkness. So he gathers some New York artists, Kathy Acker, Jean-Michel Basquiat and Johnny Thunders, and steals a poem as someone would steal a car for a joyride, as a vehicle. He commandeers Coleridge's *Ancient Mariner* and sets off into the darkness. That's the premise of the play. The idea was taking the music and the characters out of their normal environment and letting them run.

Joe Smooth
"The Promised Land"
From "The Promised Land" 12" (DJ International) 1987

Chicago House. Fingers Inc?

No.

It's Joe Smooth, "The Promised Land". This is a beautiful House record. Holy Joy forever aspire to write songs something like this, which is transcendental and spiritual, which takes you above the day to day sort of things. I always get a shiver down my spine when I hear this. I've played this record for years and years. I also love Robert Owens. A real beautiful guy, voice like an angel. The singing here comes from the church, all these singers were church guys, gay too, an effeminate touch, which went really well with the motorised rhythms. □

http://i3hypermedia.com/audio/Ikv69_MAVEE_Walkthrough.mp3
"THIS TIME IT'S WAR"

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Recommendation

To whom it may concern

As an artist I have collaborated with Kristian Vester (Goodiepal) on numerous occasions since 2004. I consider the artistic practice of Kristian Vester as one of most intriguing and challenging of our time, both when it comes to sound and visuals. Kristian Vester has when it comes to sound and music as well as visual art been an inspiration for me and many of my colleagues, and I expect that the future brings even more compelling works from his hand.

Also as Professor for the Masters at the Academy of Fine Arts in Oslo I have engaged Kristian Vester as guest professor at the academy where I teach in Oslo. Also in the teaching situation he has proven to be very skilled and experimental both when it comes to learning processes and as an inspiration for discussion.

With the extraordinary capabilities mentioned above, I hereby highly recommend any support of Kristian Vester and his remarkable artistic practice.

Yours faithfully

Henrik Plenge Jakobsen
Artist, Professor and leader of MA programme at the Academy of Fine Arts in Oslo

Iowa 2003-05-04

COPY

To whom it may concern

This is to confirm that Goodiepal / Mainpal Inv aka Scandinavian musical spearhead Knstian Vester has been and still is connected to the University of Iowa City

He has been employed as a teacher at various Master Classes taking place at the university, with great outcome for our students. Besides from that he is also participating in our Electronic Music studies and can thus be seen as a student.

Real American student, GRPP-card and papers will be fixed next time Goodiepal is visiting the University.

Feel free to visit our website where you will find Goodiepal listed amongst our great staff of internationally acclaimed teachers in the field of electronic music, to list a few.

Milton Babbitt, Terry Riley, Morton Subotnik, John Cage, and David Tudor

Kind regards

Falsk

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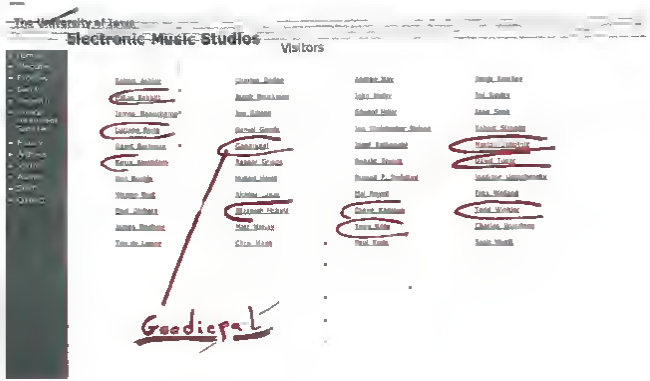


Beginning in the late 1950s, a series of experimental radio programmes made for the BBC by folk singers Ewan MacColl and Peggy Seeger, and producer Charles Parker, documented the lives of people living at the margins of British society. **Rob Young** tells the remarkable story of the

Radio Ballads

and their radical mix of oral history, traditional music and utopian socialism

Wireless networks

On 9 February 1957, in north Derbyshire, a steam engine hauling goods wagons smashed into the brake van of a second train. The driver, a 56 year old Stockport man called John Axon, was killed instantly in the collision. Instead of leaping to safety as soon as the brakes failed, he had heroically clung onto the side of his cab, hoping to wrestle it back under control further down the line, to avert any further loss of life. He was posthumously awarded the George Cross medal for bravery. 15 months later, on 2 July 1958, the usually measured radio ambience of the BBC Home Service was rent by a full 20 seconds of catastrophic noise, teaming metal and thundering debris. Recreated in the BBC studios, the explosive collision occurred towards the climax of an hour-long tribute to Axon and the unsung lives of his fellow railway workers. *The Ballad Of John Axon* was the first of a series created by Ewan MacColl, his 22 year old girlfriend Peggy Seeger, and BBC producer Charles Parker, that shone the microphone like a searchlight into obscure or overlooked sectors of British society: fishermen, teenagers, motorway builders, miners, polio sufferers, even the nomadic travelling community. Gathered on the spot, their oral histories were reworked as intelligent and dynamic folk anthropology, attuned to their era's nuanced tug-of-war between conservatism and progress. The eight programmes, broadcast by the BBC between 1958 and 1964, were experiments conducted on the wireless: splicing spoken word, field recordings, sound effects, traditional folk song and newly composed material into audio essays that verged on the hypnotic. They were given a name that elegantly fused modernity and tradition: Radio Ballads.

"The microphone," wrote British film producer John Grierson in 1934, introducing the readers of *Sight And Sound* to the new art of talking pictures, "can get about in the world. By doing so, it has the same power over reality as the camera had before it. It has the power to bring the hands of the creative artists a thousand and one vernacular elements, and the million and one sounds which ordinarily attend the working of the world. Regarded simply as a collector of raw material, the microphone, like the camera before it, has still to be released from the bondage of the studios." It was Grierson who, in another film review, instigated the modern usage of the word 'documentary'. Working as a producer for the Empire Marketing Board and GPO Film Unit, his productions, including *Industrial Britain* (1933), *Coal Face* (1935) and, most famously, *Night Mail* (1936, featuring a voiceover by WH Auden and music composed by Benjamin Britten), occupied a position between fly-on-the-wall objectivity and scripted celluloid fiction. These films promoted British industry as a hotbed of dignified labour, demonstrating the white heat of technology and its impact on everyday lives, with superimposed musical soundtracks and dispassionate commentaries. Like their Soviet contemporary Dziga Vertov, Grierson and his school of young film makers – including Edgar Anstey, Alberto Cavalcanti, Humphrey Jennings, Harry Watt and Basil Wright – were idealistic left wingers who treated the camera lens as a visionary medium that could penetrate to the essence of working lives.

"I look on cinema as a pulpit," Grierson once stated, "and use it as a propagandist." Replace the word 'cinema' with 'folk music', and that could have been the maxim of Ewan MacColl, the actor, singer and Communist Party member who exerted a similarly energising effect on the 1950s British music scene as Grierson did on homegrown cinema. Born Jimmie Miller to Scottish parents but brought up in the working class district of Salford in Greater Manchester, MacColl spent his Second World War in hiding after deserting his regiment, but emerged as a leading player, with his second wife Joan Littlewood, in the communist Theatre Workshop, which took up residence at East London's Stratford Theatre Royal in 1953. MacColl had been appearing on radio, as an actor, writer and documentary voiceover artist, with some regularity since 1933. As soon as he arrived in London the BBC gave him his own music series, *Ballads And Blues*, in which he and various guests, including Alan Lomax (resident in London at the time), AL Lloyd, Humphrey Lyttleton, Seumus Ennis and Guyanese calypso artist Cy Grant, performed songs demonstrating connections between British folk forms and the folk-blues revival that was underway in the United States. MacColl's club of the same name, which opened in 1957 in Stratford but soon moved to the Princess Louise pub in Central London, was quickly copied across the capital and throughout the nation's cities and towns, laying the groundwork for the live network that would germinate the folk and folk-rock impulses of the next two decades.

Whatever one thinks of Ewan MacColl – he is routinely lashed to the whipping-post in the debate about authenticity and purism in folk performance – the Radio Ballads represented a progressive and pluralistic aspect of his output, pushing the envelope of an ethereal medium that in the 1950s still represented futurity and nationwide cohesion. As a man of the theatre who came late to music, MacColl was in his element here – national radio was one giant step up from performing agit-prop plays off a flatbed lorry in Manchester city centre. The series might not have been outright propaganda, but the pedigree of its authors – MacColl, like Alan Lomax, was under surveillance by the British police's Special Branch, Peggy Seeger was the daughter of Pete Seeger, who had appeared before Joe McCarthy at the House Un-American Activities Committee – made them hour-long advertisements for socialism manufactured in, and disseminated from, the heart of the established broadcasting system.

Through *Ballads And Blues* and on Topic albums such as *The Shuttle And The Cage*, MacColl had already reactivated a folk song canon which came to be known as 'industrial music': songs of the coal mine, weaving loom, conveyor belt, blast furnace, fishing trawler and railway. MacColl recognised that the Industrial Revolution's displacement of millions from village and field to city and factory was the source of Britain's blues. The dreams, desires, loves, fears, pain, deprivation and tragedy of working people were reflected in these songs as much as in the agricultural ballads of yore, and it was a living tradition still being shaped.

MacColl is often accused of encouraging parochialism by insisting on musicians confining their repertoire to music from their own place of origin. Paradoxically, his own range was much broader, he was equally interested in the Child Ballads and

Courtesy (top to bottom) Peter Cox, Seeger Family Collection, Charles Parker Archive

The wreckage of the train crash that killed John Axon, Derbyshire, 1957

Charles Parker interviewing a herring fisherman for *Singing The Fishing*, East Anglia, 1960

Recording *The Ballad Of John Axon*, BBC Maida Vale Studios, London, 1958. Left to right: Brian Daley, John Cole, Peggy Seeger, Ewan MacColl, Charles Parker

"The Radio Ballads were adverts for socialism disseminated from the heart of the established broadcasting system"

nursery rhymes as miners' songs, and he slipped in his own compositions too, which were not confined to worksongs. The most famous, "The First Time Ever I Saw Your Face" (which won Roberta Flack a 1972 Grammy after her cover version had appeared in the film *Play Misty For Me*), commemorated MacColl's instant hots for Peggy Seeger. The view of MacColl as dictator largely stems from his Critics Group, instigated in 1964 as a kind of seminar for would-be singers, in which MacColl and Seeger could pass on their years of expertise in a masterclass setting, discouraging their charges from singing in anything other than their own language.

Until the mid-1950s, standard BBC practice in making radio documentaries involved researchers visiting members of the public – 'actuality characters' – and talking to them, perhaps even recording them, then returning to headquarters and working out a script based on their testimonies. The original subjects would then be revisited and presented with a scripted version of their own words for them to read aloud. That's the reason such programmes sound so stilted to modern ears: the words spoken by members of the public are almost always a scriptwriter's distillation of their spontaneous thoughts.

When MacColl and Charles Parker drove up to Stockport in the autumn of 1957 with an EMI Midget tape recorder in their weekend bags, they planned to interview John Axon's widow and his colleagues for information, then turn their findings into a dramatic reconstruction featuring actors and musicians. In fact, they stayed in the area for two weeks and ended up with more than 40 hours of voices and location recordings. The material, they agreed, was too good to tamper with.

Educated at public school and Cambridge, a Tory and an active Christian, Parker should have been a classic BBC company man. But at the Corporation he was an outsider, frustrated with his colleagues' lack of inspiration and the bureaucracy that stifled innovation. The worldview he had been born with simply could not withstand the things he saw and heard during his partnership with MacColl and Seeger, which forced him to confront labouring communities who amazed him with unexpected articulacy and lyricism. In later years, pointing at his portable tape recorder, he would say, "This little machine has taught me socialism."

Unable to rewrite actuality, MacColl proposed that the programme take the form of a depiction of Axon's last journey, embellished with voices of his fellow railwaymen, the noises of the railway itself, and a selection of songs whose lyrics, cadences and rhythms were suggested by the sounds and stories they had collected on tape: the actuality driving the narrative. Folklorist, singer and fellow communist A.L. Lloyd had been involved in the production of a 'ballad opera' in 1947, *Johnny Miner*, which dramatised the life of a coal worker's family and included professional singers reciting miners' songs selected by Lloyd. *The Ballad Of John Axon* advanced the form a significant stage further, with a mixture of traditional tunes, American folk-blues motifs and even a hint of calypso. Peggy Seeger returned from a long tour in the Soviet Union when the script was half finished, and helped MacColl write accompaniments to many of his songs (she would take a larger role in the later Ballads, as musical director and by collecting much of the spoken matter). Parker then assembled a small instrumental ensemble in the studio, recorded the music, and then, in what appears to have been an epiphanic 48 hour frenzy of tape splicing, edited the final programme together.

The Ballad Of John Axon opens with MacColl singing *"John Axon was a working man..."* A plummy radio announcer's voice interrupts occasionally to supply factual information. From this 'official' position we delve right down to the nitty gritty of daily life on the railways, with reminiscences about the hardships and elations of working with steam engines, and testimonials to the good character of Axon himself from fellow workers and his widow. It tells the tragedy of an ordinary working man thrown into an emergency which required a burst of heroism: a ballad for the technological age. The whole thing is woven together around MacColl and Seeger's contemporary folk music: a mainly American flavoured banjo accompaniment plus the odd lapse into jazz arrangements, all of which support Axon's canonisation as a British equivalent of Casey Jones. Throughout, the iron horses rattle down the line, whistling shrilly. At one point a chugging engine metamorphoses into a huffing harmonica, while the moment when the steam brake fails is a harsh, chilling shriek of metallic agony. The broadcast was favourably received and excited a good deal of comment at the time, as well as being entered for that year's Prix d'Italia, and the BBC duly commissioned further programmes.

The subsequent Radio Ballads took MacColl, Parker and Seeger on a snapshot survey of various cross sections of British life. *Song Of A Road* (1959), about the construction of the M1 motorway, was an uncomfortable marriage of factual documentary and location reportage; they hadn't quite got the balance right between the 'official version' and the story on the ground. Chalking that one up to experience, they afterwards cut out all objective narration and let the material tell its own story.

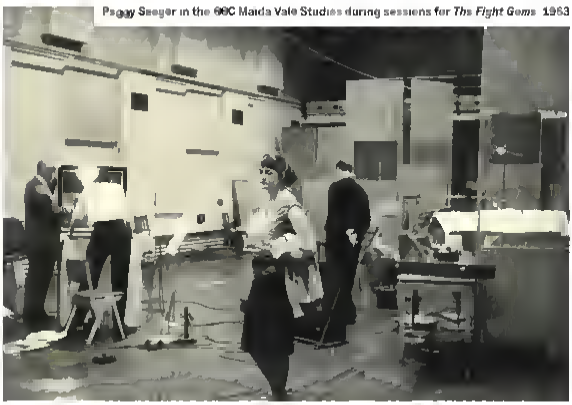
MacColl remained most satisfied with the third ballad, *Singing The Fishing* (1960), which contrasted the herring industry in East Anglia (where old methods were dying out) with the new fishing centre of north east Scotland (where trawlermen cut through the North Sea in the latest diesel-driven boats and lifted thousands of fish a day). In Great Yarmouth, the octogenarian Sam Larner, a veteran seaman since 1892, poured out reminiscences, songs, shanties and mariners' cant by the bucketload, falling into a kind of memory-trance as the long hours of interviewing transported him back into his younger self. MacColl later remembered that as Larner regressed into his memories, his vernacular and vocabulary became more biblical, rich, rhyming and uncensored. The history of Yarmouth's declining industry was all there in Larner's head to be unlocked; he had seen the ages of sail and steam come and go, and known days when the docksides weren't big enough to hold the day's catch. Another seaman's voice describes the exhilaration of the moment the herring net is landed on deck, illustrated with the squishy thump itself.

The technical set-up of *Singing The Fishing* achieved a new level of inventiveness, involving much more of a 'live' feel as tape and gramophone operators spun in the voices and sound effects, becoming members of the musical ensemble and allowing the musicians in the studio to work very closely with the speech rhythms on the tape extracts. It was this programme, MacColl stated, that "taught us that in actuality could be found the subject matter for songs, useges, turns of expression, rhythms, pulses, idioms, all the elements out of which songs can be fashioned... Finally, we had learned to trust the actuality and to allow it to shape the entire work."

On *The Big Hewer* (1961) MacColl was in his element, taking listeners down into the electrically lit underworld of the coal mine. We hear the clank and grind of the mining cage, the roar of the drill, and hear stories brought from the depths by miners from the pits of Yorkshire, Northumberland and Wales. The legendary 'Campbell', the 'big hewer' of mining lore, hangs over the piece like a delving demiurge.

The time needed to gather actuality recordings, the weeks of poring through and editing the tapes, musicians' rehearsal and session fees, etc, meant the Radio Ballads guzzled BBC money. Getting the programmes into a finished state led to heartburn for Parker and questions at the top of the BBC about whether the required budget justified the results. *The Body Blow* (1962), on the psychology of living

Peggy Seeger and Ewan MacColl, 1960



Peggy Seeger in the BBC Maida Vale Studios during sessions for *The Fight Game*, 1963

with pain, was produced quickly and cheaply in an effort to save the series from the BBC accountants' axe. But if anything, the programmes' increasing sophistication and scope were going to need *more* resources, not cutbacks.

"It's like a big dustbin lid covering the sky," says Dot Dobby, a Salford girl barely out of school, during the soundtrack to *On The Edge*, the Radio Ballad exposing the fears and dreams of teenagers aged 14 to 20. She's speaking in 1962, year of the Cuban missile crisis, about the Bomb and its looming umbrella of fear casting its shadow over her future. Far from the groovy carefree world depicted in movies like Cliff Richard's *Summer Holiday*, MacColl and co found a gloomy generation facing uncertain futures, dead-end jobs, and uncomprehending adults telling them to pull their socks up. Their parents had weathered a world war but their psychic defences were not braced to withstand the 1960s youthquake. Progressive views on sex, marriage and capitalism are aired, which makes you wonder how many of the owners of these voices might have become hippies or radicals within another half decade. As it is, they inhabit a world seemingly without clear channels (feminism, Vietnam, underground culture) for their confusion, anger and altruism. "Their language is still akin to the language of the traditional ballads," wrote MacColl in his autobiography, "and as in their 'with it' vocabulary so in their passionate hopes and fears, these young people are the legitimate heirs of Lord Randall, of Burd Ellen and Young Tamlane – and, for that matter, of Hamlet."

The Travelling People, the final Ballad, broadcast in 1964, was the most ambitious of all, grappling with the vilified and largely unwanted itinerant population of Britain. The programme did not flinch from including the negative sentiments of the 'not in my backyard' brigade: one speaker refers to the travellers as "misfits... the maggots of society". The soundworld is particularly rich and evocative of difference: the travellers' words are surrounded by the outdoor ambience in which they dwell: birdsong, horses' hooves, the rush of road traffic. The voices of 'respectable' society speak in the dead air of cushioned interiors. Parker's editing skills reach a new level of finesse, so a succession of phrases such as "They call us the wild ones/The pilgrims of the mist/ Romanies, Gypsies, diddikais, mumpers, travellers/ Nomads of the road/Blackfaced diddies/... In Carlisle, they call you porters, dirty porters this, dirty porters that..." whizz past in a kaleidoscope of lexicographic plurality and regional accents. Its conclusion – comparing Britain's treatment of its nomads to the Nazi pogroms – is shocking, but is borne out by the words of Labour councillor Harry Watton, who is heard to say, "one must exterminate the impossibles". It is a bitter, troubling end to the Radio Ballads.

First aired half a century ago, the Radio Ballads refuse to be dyed in the sepia hues of media nostalgia. The political imperative behind their innovative format and the connection to grassroots society, unconstrained by a BBC style sheet, has preserved their freshness and spontaneous vitality. It would be naive to imagine that these programmes aren't telling us what to think, but the persuasion is in the fabric of the edit, not the decorous tones of a chiselled BBC announcer. And with no guiding commentary, the didactic or moral centre is unfixed: the documentaries are left complex, unresolved, amalgams of multiple points of view. In the late 50s such an approach was radical and without precedent.

Writing at the end of his life, MacColl recalled that by placing himself at the centre of the folk revival, he "hoped to arrest the plasticization of the popular culture. We hoped that these songs would help English, Irish, Scots and Welsh workers to assert their national and class identity. Then again, it was necessary to preserve this highly specialised treasure of social and political information against the day when the workers came into their own." That day never came, of course. Charles Parker died in 1980, MacColl in 1989. Peggy Seeger, now 73, continues to work as a folk musician in America. But in 2006 the BBC commissioned a new batch of six Radio Ballads, which in the spirit of the originals, dealt with contemporary issues: HIV/AIDS sufferers, the pro-and anti-hunting lobbies, sectarian conflict in Northern Ireland, the declining steel and shipyard industries. If they did not stand out so sharply from the rest of the BBC's factual output, it was precisely because their dense narrative frieze of voices, noises and music, which the original Ballads achieved by trial and error, had become standard practice. □ All eight Radio Ballads have just been issued on CD by Topic. Peter Cox's book *Set Into Song: Ewan MacColl, Charles Parker, Peggy Seeger And The Radio Ballads* is published by Labatie Books and is available direct from setintosong.co.uk

Courtesy Seeger Family Collection (Seeger/MacColl) Charles Parker Archive

Pushing the envelope of algorithmic software, the works of

Florian Hecker

reshape listeners' perceptual processes, taking the spatial soundworlds imagined by Xenakis a step further into psychoacoustic black holes. Just don't call it noise.

By **Nick Cain**. Photography by **Leon Chew**

Dark matter compiler

Florian Hecker at Sadie Coles HQ, October 2008

An art gallery space, just off Regent Street in the West End of London. Five speakers hang from the ceiling on one side of the room in an L-shaped configuration. Three face outwards, two point towards the wall. Electronic sounds begin to emerge: frequencies swoop in vertiginous patterns, mutating in form before abruptly vanishing. Uncomfortably high-pitched sinetones slide and oscillate wildly, shedding bristling overtones. As the piece reaches a peak midway through its 26 minute duration, barrages of serrated, piercing tones spurt from the speakers. The gallery assistant firmly places her hands over her ears and focuses intently on a computer screen.

The composition is *Pentaphonic Dark Energy*, the most recent work by German sound artist Florian Hecker. The intensity of the listening experience is heightened by the strangeness of the room in which it is presented – one of the three London branches of Sadie Coles, a high-powered gallerist whose blue-chip roster includes artists of the profile and market value of Richard Prince, John Currin and Matthew Barney. In such company, Hecker's uncompromising experiments in sound seem glaringly incongruous.

As extraordinary as it is for his music to be presented here, there is a certain narrative logic at play. For several years Hecker has directed his attention largely, though not exclusively, towards the gallery context, creating sound works for his own exhibitions and for group shows, as well as for collaborations with visual artists like Carsten Höller, Angela Bulloch and Gerith Wyn Evans. Hecker's focus on sound art is driven by his fascination with psychoacoustics, the study of the process of perception of sound, and an attendant impetus to present his music in spatial environments, whether they be museums, galleries or live performance spaces. Or open-air pavilions: he recently composed a 40 minute piece for *The Morning Line*, a pavilion structure with 52 inbuilt loudspeakers designed by architect Matthew Ritchie, currently being exhibited in Seville, Spain.

Like his long-term collaborator Russell Haswell (see *The Wire* 285), Hecker values a merging of art and technology. The bulk of his music is generated from algorithmic computer software, technology which he has modified and updated in collaboration with engineers and programmers. And like Haswell, Hecker exploits the full potential of the software to create extreme, or at least intense, sonic environments, experiential spaces in which the listener's perceptual processes can be affected or altered.

"Most of the things that I've been working with in recent years, they only work in this situation, where I can design the space, where the speakers are located and how they're placed," he explains. "It's about hopefully opening up the possibility to change the perception for a short moment – this state of something where you're not so able to know the coordinates of the space you're in or where you're referring to. This is something psychoacoustics eventually helps to achieve. It's a way of intensifying sounds, putting them in a more spatial context."

Hecker's career in sound art began in 2001. Invited to contribute to a group show at the Vienna Secession gallery, he exhibited a CD player and a pair of headphones, playing a couple of his compositions. "I wanted to create a sound piece rather than a sound installation," he explains. "Many sound installations

that are beautifully installed and work very nicely in the space, the actual sound is dreadful. Mediocre, ephemeral, lacking in intensity. I don't see my works as sound installations, I'd rather say they're installations or they're sound pieces in the space."

Hecker had relocated to Vienna in 1998, attracted by the dissident strains of laptop electronica coalescing around the Mego label. He was struck by the "complete otherness" of the early Mego releases. "Going to a record shop like Optimal in Munich or ordering things from Hard Wax in Berlin, their stuff clearly stood out from everything else. The records were beautifully designed. They appealed to me very much – beautiful things, beautiful-sounding but very unusual."

He quickly connected with the members of flagship Mego groups like General Magic and Farmers Manual, as well as label boss Peter Rehberg, who introduced him to Russell Haswell. Mego released Hecker's *IT ISO161975* debut in 1998. A remix album, *[R*]Iso | Chall*, followed in 2000, with contributions from Bruce Gilbert, Jim O'Rourke and Marcus Schmickler, among others. Haswell put out Hecker's second, *[OT] Xackpy Breakpoint*, on his OR imprint in 1999. Hecker readily acknowledges that on both he was working off his debt to Pan Sonic. "In the 90s this was the band that made me start to make my own music."

"Through the Farmers Manual people in Vienna I was much more introduced to the area of computer music," he continues. "I got very fed up with things I made myself. I realised I wasn't exploring the whole frequency spectrum, and realising this was a very liberating experience for me." He began to work with the algorithmic software favoured by Farmers Manual and Haswell: SuperCollider, a version of Iannis Xenakis's GENOYN software modified for him by a programmer named Alberto de Campo, and the Composers Desktop Project application, developed by Trevor Wishart in the 80s.

Algorithmic software generates sounds in the form of waves, then maps the process of their development via a stochastic process (in which hard mathematics generates probabilities). The user can control the sounds by exercising varying levels of control over the boundaries of the stochastic parameters. "The GENOYN is a generative instrument," Hecker explains. "It's like an oscillator, but each wave-cycle has different break points. It stochastically alters each wave cycle. None of them is going to be identical. It puts break points in a space and connects them through. All of these tools are very free in a way. There can be a lot of chaotic happenings, but if you want you can adopt a totally controlled method of working as well. I like this flexibility."

Hecker's first experiments with the software appeared on 2000's *SaskieWoxi*, the sole release by cd_slopper, his duo with Oswald Berthold of Farmers Manual. The two also ran the now defunct online label Fals.ch. The album was eclipsed by the pieces included in the 2001 Vienna Secession exhibition, which were released a couple of years later as a Mego 12". An expanded 21 minute version of one of them, "Stocha Acid Vlook", was the centrepiece of Hecker's third album, 2003's *Sun Pandämonium*. The album retains faint echoes of the work of his Mego cohorts, but it links more overtly to the computer music of heavyweight predecessors like Xenakis, Gottfried Michael Koenig and Herbert Brün – each of whom had worked with and developed algorithmic sound synthesis software as a tool to enrich the compositional process.

Hecker sidesteps questions about the significance of the names of his compositions – "It's a secret," he smiles shyly. But the tripartite title of "Stocha Acid Vlook" neatly summarises its virtues, linking together the software's stochastic function, its caustic and outlandish textures (via the techno-babble neologism "Vlook"), and the piece's near-lysergic meshing of chaotic frequencies and heavily oscillating tones into a sonic assault. A quantum leap forward from *Xackpy Breakpoint* and a quantum development for Hecker's music, *Sun Pandämonium* sketched the framework for a modern computer music, appropriating a language which had fallen into disuse outside of the realms of academia and updating it by allying it with a noise (to use a word Hecker disavows) sensibility.

Hecker had by now become interested in psychoacoustics, a field of study which analyses the sensory and perceptual aspects of the hearing process – the relationship between the sounds which enter the ear and the effects they produce, with emphasis on the roles played by the brain and the nervous system, and the influence of the physical space of the listening environment.

"It is all about spatial perception of sound. It's a fascinating subject," he enthuses. "In many ways we're witnessing it every day subconsciously in our environment: reflections of spaces and audible reflections and acoustic illusions. When I've worked on COs I've always programmed timescales which use delays, tone sequences and rapid amplitude changes from one channel to the other – all of which have been studied in psychoacoustics for decades.

"I remember a time when people were talking about 5.1 Surround Sound DVDs," he continues. "There was a short window in time when this seemed to be the latest trend. At the time I was totally obsessed about stereo – how can stereo make the acoustic experience more intense? This led to me researching psychoacoustics and finding out more about things I did subconsciously already. I was looking them up in books like Brian Moore's *Introduction To The Psychology Of Hearing*, which is this fantastic book on psychoacoustics. And then, like how so many things work, you're doing things by chance and unconsciously, and then you look at how to improve this thing, repeat it or make it better."

Hecker was already working with Japanese sound artist Yasunao Tone, a duo documented on the ultra-jittery barrages of 2004's *Palimpsest*. His collaboration with his compatriot Carsten Höller, best known for installing five large tubular slides in the Turbine Hall of London's Tate Modern in 2006, addressed itself more directly to the concerns of psychoacoustics. The two had met in Gothenburg in 2003 when both took part in a group exhibition curated by Carl Michael von Hausswolff. Hecker's compositions, collected on the 2007 *Hecker, Höller, Tracks* double LP, were played in an empty gallery space as part of a Höller retrospective in Marseille in 2004. They set pulsing click-tones in sharp staccato rhythms, shifting them in and out of sync with each other, referencing a psychoacoustic phenomenon known as the Precedence Effect, as well as alluding cryptically to the tropes of Minimal Techno.

"Basically it's a celebration of the Precedence Effect, also known as the Haas Effect, after the German acoustician Helmut Haas," Hecker explains. "When you have sound coming from two sources there's a short offset, not longer than 30 milliseconds, when it's almost impossible to tell from which side the sound is coming, or which sound approaching you first. This is what this piece is doing, it's this flickering rhythm, constant shifting within this margin of 30 milliseconds."

Hecker explored psychoacoustics further on his 51 minute soundtrack for Angela Bulloch's *Disenchanted Forest x 1001* installation, released as a double CD, each disc containing a different mix, one stereo, the other "virtual binaural". The depth of field of the recording vividly represents the experience of hearing the soundtrack in the gallery space. Of all Hecker's albums it also best uses silence, with sequences of individual sounds – electroacoustic squalls and granular smears – reverberating and dissolving in empty air.

2004's *PV Tracks* was a companion piece rather than a soundtrack to an exhibition by Austrian artist Florian Pumhösl, included in CD form with the show's catalogue and released commercially by Mego. All three were one-off collaborations. Hecker's collaboration with Cerith Wyn Evans, however, his longest-running with a visual artist, is yet to be documented. "We met in 2004 in Vienna a couple of times and spoke about how a collaboration could address space and time," he explains, "in contrast to audiovisual collaborations in which sound and vision are married. I had a slight aversion to this wave of

> "It's about changing the perception for a short moment – where you're not so able to know the coordinates of the space you're in. It's a way of intensifying sounds, putting them in a more spatial context"

audiovisual pieces where you had some software-generated video and an electronic soundtrack. I was more interested in starting a collaboration and layering it over time, so the collaboration could work very much in terms of discussions and dialogues."

Hecker's 2006 album *Recordings For Rephlex* mixes recordings created for gallery spaces with software compositions. His rather improbable appearance on the label came about after Haswell introduced him to Richard James, aka Aphex Twin. "There are more connections than you might think," he points out. "Our tastes and computer music can really connect us immediately. Many of his things have similar working processes, even if they sound completely different."

The albums are all created using the same software, but each has a distinct identity: the muted tonal oscillations of *PV Tracks* contrast starkly with *Sun Pandämonium*'s sensory overload and the spluttering textures of *Recordings For Rephlex*. Hecker attributes this partially to the extensive editing process involved, which he compares to puzzle-solving. He shies away from discussion about the content of the albums – why they sound the way they do, or how they might usefully be compared to each other. "It's not a trivial question to answer," he avers. "This one was made in this year, that one was made in that year, and so many things happen in between."

Hecker's next releases will be a limited edition cassette on Tochnit Aleph, and *Neu CD*, released on the in-house label of his Berlin art dealer, Galerie Neu, packaged in an elegant transparent case designed by Peter Saville. He's presently working on a new album for Editions Mego which delights in the title of *Acid In The Style Of David Tudor*, to be created using a Buchla synthesizer and an analogue computer, "a very new thing for me".

Of the title's laconic reference to Tudor, Hecker comments: "I made this permanent piece at the University of Utrecht where all these computer music instruments I've been working with over the past ten years are structured by means of an artificial neural network, which is clearly referencing David Tudor's neural synthesis ideas. But however connected these things are, I don't want to put this in the foreground of the work."

Hecker certainly knows and respects the history of computer music and sound spatialisation. Discussing his contribution to Matthew Ritchie's pavilion, he reels off a lengthy list of historic precedents. But beyond commonalities in methodology, he is reluctant to articulate how his work relates to that of his progenitors. He eventually concedes with a dry, ironic grin that *Acid In The Style Of David Tudor* is his attempt at "improving" the work of Tudor, "in a cheeky way".

"On a certain level there are all these micro-references. I like the idea of footnotes – if you want to look into them, you can," he elaborates. "It's not always an easy thing to translate these footnotes in the piece. I don't want to speak too much about my music because it takes something away from it. This has been said by so many people: you can talk about the process of composition and how things are made, and what they're referring to. But speaking about the actual works is something very, very difficult."

Though understandable, his stance risks focusing attention exclusively on the theories and technology behind his music, in the process obscuring its sheer sonic power. *Sun Pandämonium* and *Recordings For Rephlex*, *Palimpsest*, Haswell & Hecker's *Blockest Ever Block* – are all thrilling, viscerally intense sound experiences. However, he doesn't regard his music as noise, though it regularly deploys noise frequencies, be they brown noise, white noise or pink noise.

"The term 'noise' is a linguistic substitute. I don't think we know yet what noise actually is. I did a panel called Noise Symposium with Curtis Roads and Yasunao Tone at the San Francisco Art Institute two years ago. Curtis made a very good presentation on the different notions of noise, and Yasunao talked more from a philosophical angle, about the idea of noise as a parasite on a signal. I came out of it not knowing what noise actually is. There are so many different ways of reading it, and I don't have my own." He acknowledges his music can be read as confrontational, but insists it's not intended to be: "That's just one way of seeing it."

With its unfamiliar timbres, its focuses on pitch and tone, and its brittle, volatile textures, Hecker's music avoids familiar emotional signifiers, but the intensity of the experience it offers is in itself highly emotional. When I ask him about the emotion in his music, his guard slips briefly. "It's completely emotional," he blurts out. How so? "Because I say so," comes the deadpan reply. "This is something we've come across in a few questions this afternoon. I'm clearly trying to avoid these references to emotions, but it doesn't mean it's not an emotional process for me. It's a very passionate process, in fact."

In a subsequent email exchange, he elaborates: "It seems to me a rather old epistemological enquiry to attempt to isolate and exacerbate emotional qualities when speaking of music. I believe the perceptual experience my compositions provide speak for themselves in a variety of ways, depending on the listeners background, preferences, etc."

All of which is nothing if not consistent with his privileging of the experiential intensity of his sound works. "I'm interested in the moment where you can't describe what you're hearing with your classical music vocabulary if you don't have this background knowledge," he emphasises. "This is what is interesting to me in performance and in the installation pieces – you're experiencing something that's very abstract and that's taking you to a different space, where your normal music references or installation references are out of place for a short moment."

He isn't trying to help his listeners become more aware of and more perceptive about their listening processes? "It's not about education. More than challenging any preconception concerning sound or music, my work and its psychoacoustic explorations essentially attempt to rediscover the acoustically perceived world anew," he concludes. "It's about the phenomenology of experiencing the piece. The sounds are a means to get to this." □ *Live @ WDR* (Tochnit Aleph) and *Neu CD* (Galerie Neu) are available now. *The Morning Line* is on display at the Biennial of Contemporary Art, Seville, Spain to 11 January 2009.
florianhecker.blogspot.com

The secret gardener

Three years on from the release of the stellar *I Am A Bird Now*,

Antony & The Johnsons

have come back down to earth with a brace of new releases that swap the transgendered ballads of old for a series of dissonant environmental laments.

By Alan Licht. Photography by Michael Schmelling

"I'm not really a one album a year kind of person – I'm already on the Kate Bush schedule," Antony Hegarty laughs, as we sit in a restaurant in New York's Tribeca district on a late October afternoon. It's been nearly half a decade since Antony & The Johnsons created a stir with their second release, *I Am A Bird Now*, which won the Mercury Music Prize in 2005. A truly memorable album of purposeful, piano based, gracefully arranged songs, it showcased Antony's striking vocals – often compared to Nina Simone, Otis Redding, Billie Holiday, Little Jimmy Scott and others, yet utterly distinctive, and ultimately sounding neither specifically male nor female, just human. The album's ten tracks were artfully woven together, focusing on a few universal themes – vulnerability, childhood, death and, most notably, gender. With Peter Hujar's indelible 1974 photograph *Candy Darling On Her Deathbed* occupying the cover, and guest vocal spots from Boy George and Rufus Wainwright, the record was both identifiable with the gay community and simultaneously transcended it. Sorrowful and uplifting at the same time, emotional but not sentimental or cloying, *Bird* achieved a unique balance.

Antony has been popping up everywhere as a guest vocalist (Björk, Hercules And Love Affair, Current 93, Lou Reed, Laurie Anderson, CocoRosie, Marc Almond, Bryan Ferry, Franco Battiato), but swears this doesn't account for the delay in releasing a successor to *Bird*. Now he finally has a follow-up – two, actually. An EP, *Another World*, appeared in October and a new album, *The Crying Light*, follows in January. Both are culled from two years of recording sessions. "I was in five different studios. It was ridiculous," he says wearily. "I recorded like, 30 songs, written over the last six or seven years." When I remind him it also took him three years to complete *Bird* (already a departure from 1998's self-titled debut, which Antony claims was recorded in a single day) he laughs, shaking his head. 'Terrible. I find it a lot easier to do live shows. In the studio I get really selfconscious, so I tend to record everything more than once. It's really like fishing, you know, you record the whole set, maybe two will come out, go back and record again and maybe another one or two will come out. You have to keep going until you can live with it."

The effort shows in the glistening arrangements on *The Crying Light*, a remarkable leap forward even from those on *Bird*. The fluttering dissonance and friction sounds that creep in near the end of "One Dove", the elegant clarinet on "Epilepsy Is Dancing" and the sumptuous orchestral backing for "Everglade" are among the highlights. 'This record by far has the most diverse input. A lot of the songs have three arrangers [or four—Antony, Maxim Moston, Doug Wieselman, and Nico Muhly are all credited], we really did them in layers, there's bits of everyone on them. When I got the Marc And The Mambas album *Torment And Toreros* [an early Marc Almond project] when I was 13 years old, I decided I wanted a string section when I grew up, and it kind of just developed from there. The first album was just my keyboard arrangement ideas transposed to strings. The second album was me, Maxim and Julia [Kent]. And on this one the process was dense and we tried to pull it all back again at the end of the day."

Thematically, *The Crying Light* retains the cohesion of *Bird*, but Antony largely turns away from intersexuality towards a new emphasis on nature, particularly climate change. "It's definitely a different body of work, emerging from me at a different point in my life, songs I've written in my thirties, things I think about or care about now," he says when I mention it. "Gender is an issue that's innate in everything I do, as a transgendered person I'm always seeing things through that lens. A lot of the songs are just exploring my relationship to the environment, to the world around me, the landscape beyond my inner landscape. What's interesting about those folkie kids that came out in the early 2000s was that they were exploring, for the first time in a while, an idea of inner garden and there would be a very high wall. they weren't even dealing with the world outside the wall. I'm interested in the inner garden, but I think the next step is how does this relate to the greater world.

"This is quite a pagan record," he continues. "I just kept thinking about paradise, and how it pertains to our relationship to the natural world, and what we will be left with with no nature. What does paradise mean? For me paradise doesn't mean an empty, white, eternal expanse of aloneness, that's not my idea of heaven. My idea of heaven is probably something unfurling,

Antony Hegarty in New York, October 2008

"I think we get born out of the earth. *The Crying Light* is saying, I'm made out of this place. If there's a possibility for paradise, this is it. I'm not dreaming about elsewhere. I'm not visiting"

the way that nature unfurls in its infinite forms, you know? It's creative, that's the fun of being an artist, is that we get to dance in the shadow of that."

The haunting "Another Place", which appears on both releases, is the most direct query about life on Earth after nature, and to me the best of the new songs. On a visit to Antony's office I notice a poster on the wall for Peter Sempel's 1991 film *Just Visiting This Planet*, a documentary about Japanese Butoh dancer Kazuo Ohno, and, indulging in a bit of free association, wonder if perhaps the idea of visiting the planet might make people more respectful of the Earth – a notion that Antony categorically rejects. "I think we get born out of the earth, this album is like, I was born out of this place, I'm made out of this place. If there's a possibility for paradise, this is it. I'm not dreaming about elsewhere, I'm not visiting, I'm made of this place."

As it happens, photographs of Ohno appear on the covers of both the EP and the album. "I went to school in France when I was 16, for a summer, and they were putting up posters of a theatre troupe near where I was studying, and there was this picture, which is now on the cover of the EP [of Ohno in women's formal wear], and I didn't know what it was, but I was like, please could I have one of those posters, and I put it up over my bed," Antony explains. "I had that over my bed for the rest of my teenage years. When I got to New York I saw that movie [the Sempel film], with this footage of this old Japanese person doing this dance with rocks, where his fingers were crumbling around the rock and rocks were falling and he was kind of crying without water coming out of his face. Anyway I started crying so hard, and I didn't know why I was crying, and I went home and that picture was over my bed, and I said shit, that's the same man. I researched him more, and when I finished school I started studying with this teacher who studied with him, her name was Meureen Fleming. I studied Butoh for a few months with her, but I realised it was him I was really interested in. There were sort of two schools, the Min Tanaka school and the Kazuo school. The Min Tanaka school is really depraved, and really lures insanity and an exploration of all that is kitsch. And Kazuo is sort of the opposite, it's so interesting because they call it 'dance into the darkness', but he's always seemed to be seeking some kind of a radiance that was redemptive for him personally, and I guess that appealed to me, so I became interested also in translating some of his ideas into musical ideas."

The starkly displayed black and white photos of Ohno have a similar effect to the image of Candy Darling on the cover of *Bird*, but there's a significant difference – still alive at the age of 103, Ohno is very much a survivor, unlike Darling and Hujar, who both died young. "He was really my model, especially as someone getting older as an artist. He made his masterwork as a solo dancer between the ages of 75 and 95. He kind of became catatonic, he doesn't move at this point and doesn't speak anymore, but he really practised his form until he couldn't move any more. I loved that he danced until he couldn't move and then he kept taking the right steps inside himself. I'm really interested in older people, I really want old people to listen to my music, that's my goal."

A few days before our conversation, I went to see Antony & The Johnsons play a concert at the Apollo, the venerable hall in Harlem – an unlikely setting for what's still, at least superficially, a downtown white indie pop act. Waiting for the show to start, I thought about Buddy Holly playing there in the 1950s, booked under the mistaken impression that he was black, and then about reading that Antony originally thought Yazoo's Alison Moyet's voice was a man's – and then, as Antony emerged from the wings wearing a full length white gown, it began to make more sense, as part of the pop continuum of border crossings and identity confusion. "It's kind of an intense place to play, as a white person going in there doing your number, bringing in that white audience," he says when I ask him about the Apollo show. "So much of what I have in my hands, tools I use, comes from black America. It's all theirs, filtered through a few generations of white pop musicians. With a few things from other places, but it can't be denied. When the security guards came up to me after the show and said, 'Let me be the first to welcome you to the legendary Apollo Theatre, you are always welcome back,' I started crying so hard, because the only people that it really matters to like the show are the security guards, because they're the only ones who will tell you the truth. They got no reason to lie to you. Then I felt much better," he smiles.

Besides the location, the show was unusual in using a small orchestra, and a lighting design that placed Antony, out from behind his piano singing at centre stage, in almost total darkness at the outset, gradually becoming more lit, though still moving in shadows as the concert went on. "The lighting was an experiment," he notes. "[Performance artist] Marina Abramovic suggested it, she said why don't you try a thing where you go from black to white during the show, and I said OK, we'll try it. For me the live shows are more and more about finding a way to trick myself into stepping into the present, and inviting the audience to experience the present in a different way than they might normally, step out of more pedestrian expectations. When I go to a show, I'm always looking for opportunities to take a deeper breath, to feel in my heart the experience of being alive more fully than I'm allowed to in real life. There's lots of opportunity for magic in live shows, and it kind of gets back to that paradise thing, seeing things freshly."

The Apollo show, like Antony & The Johnsons' stints at New York's similarly durable Carnegie Hall and Town Hall before it, not only signifies how far Antony himself has travelled from his roots in lower Manhattan's gay experimental theatre and cabaret worlds, but reinforces how short-lived the city's cultural fringes can be by comparison. When he first arrived in New York in 1990, Antony became instantly aware that the underground that drew him to the city, as he glimpsed it in the 1988 documentary of the downtown performance art and gay nightclub scenes, *Mondo New York*, was rapidly disintegrating. "Yeah, it's classic. I watched this New York documentary and there were these people from the late 19th century bemoaning the fact that a man could return to the neighbourhood of his birth 30 years later, in 1890, and not recognise a single building on the block. The character of the city is that it reinvents itself every ten years – from the ground up. It's not like Rome that builds on top of itself, this city builds itself down as if it didn't exist. People don't even know that they're inhabiting ghosts of people who were here ten years earlier, 20 years earlier, and yet weirdly it transfers some of these cultural impulses unknowingly, from one to the other, and you can look back and connect the dots and realise, shit, I was practically possessed by someone who's done that ten years earlier. But you made that little change, and that made it of your time. Like any old whale passing a song from one generation to the next."

Enrolled at NYU, Antony was schooled in the history of transgender performance by two of his teachers, The Cockettes' Martin Worman and Ron Argelander. "[Ron] was in Jack Smith's production of Ibsen's

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Ghosts before he was replaced by a penguin in a shopping cart," Antony laughs. "Ron was the one who led me into the school, he said, you should come to New York. Within that community of scholars there was a sense of urgency, because no one knew how it was going to pan out, no one knew how culture ultimately was going to be recollected in ten years, what would be preserved, what wouldn't be preserved. You could probably write a good paper about what happened in New York City and what's happening on a different kind of a scale in the environment.

"The thing I always wonder is, what filled the void? There are all those guys, we could make a list of ten key cultural players, what did we get served instead? What became valuable instead of Charles Ludlam, Jack Smith? I always think about what if those guys had kept going." Antony formed his own ensemble, Blacklips, to perform his plays and stage shows. I ask if that was done to fill the 'void', as he saw it then. He shrugs, "It was just us, making a din. I have it written in my journal, before I moved to New York 'I want to move to downtown New York, start a band of perverts and we'll do midnight musicals...blah blah blah blah blah.' And we did it. We got way more than we bargained for, I didn't even know what crack was when I was writing that down, what crack and heroin-addicted drag queens really were [laughs]. It was amazing, it was very vigorous and colourful, inspiring. But it was very small – it wasn't even on the map."

The transition from doing mini-spectacles in the wee hours at the East Village's notorious Pyramid Club (then on its last legs) to the formation of The Johnsons was slow but sure. "We'd been putting together these stage shows, and my role was always to come out and do a song – it was almost like that's the way I justified singing a song. I probably didn't have the confidence to just do it on its own, but with 20 people doing can-can behind you [laughs] with a character, and whatever... after we did Blacklips at the Pyramid, we started doing PS 122 and Jackie 60. I got to a point where my shows were getting more and more fragmented and more and more like a series of tableaux, less and less narrative. I'd written three plays, *Love*, *Womb* and *Father*, which I wanted to combine into one piece for the millennium. I tried to raise money for it for several years, and I got rejected by all these institutions – the Jerome Foundation shit on me, all these institutions shit on me, told me my work wasn't legitimate because of the casting. And I said fuck this, I'm not doing theatre any more, this is a dead end. I decided that my investment in it ultimately was the music, so I said I'll just do music and come back to some of this stuff later." He cites *Turning*, a 2004 collaboration with video artist Charles Atlas in which he and The Johnsons performed in front of giant video projections of runway models slowly revolving, as "kind of a gesture towards the more performative aspects of the show as well as music. I got an NYFFA grant, used that to make a record, and I never did another play." All the songs on the first album are from the Blacklips period – "Cripple And The Starfish" was also the name of one of Antony's Blacklips musicals, and much of the album's blood and guts lyrics reflect the post-John Waters/Grand Guignol sensibility of Blacklips.

That first album was released by David Tibet, and as you look at who's played on the Antony & The Johnsons albums – ranging from Tibet associates like Baby Dee and William Basinski to ex-Lounge Lizards Doug Wieselman and Steven Bernstein to indie rockers Joan 'As Policewoman' Wasser and Thomas Bartlett – and consider Antony's different collaborations, you see him at the intersection of several different musical worlds. Much of his exposure is due to fellow musicians' admiration and enthusiasm. "I have the best possible karma in music, in terms of the trajectory of people's awareness of me, because I was put forward by other artists, never really by the press...until later." He came to Tibet's attention "through a friend of mine, John Marchent, an English guy who came to the first concert we did at the Kitchen, we did a concert with Billy Basinski. Billy curated a night in 1997 called Life On Mars, Billy and I were really old friends and had done a lot of work together in his loft throughout the 90s. John saw that concert, went back to England and told David about it, brought David my CD, which I was just peddling myself, and David said, 'I'll release it.' He said this is legitimate at a time when 90 per cent of those people outside of my own community would have been willing to just write me off as some kind of drag sensation.

"Devendra [Banhart] did the same thing," he continues, "by putting me on that folk compilation [2004's *Golden Apples Of The Sun*]. It was crazy – suddenly, overnight, I was totally recontextualised by this new generation of kids who didn't really have any clue as to where I came from or the fact that I'd been doing soft-shoe in Manhattan for 12 years, done different kinds of work." But by far his biggest champions have been Lou Reed and Hal Willner. Antony sang on Reed's 2002 album *The Raven* and toured as a member of his ensemble, more recently he participated in Reed's staging of his 1973 album *Berlin*. In Julian Schnabel's film of the show you can see Antony sing a showstopping rendition of The Velvet Underground's "Candy Says", where the usually unflappable Reed looks awestruck at its conclusion.

"Hal bought my EP *I Fell In Love With A Dead Boy* at Other Music," Antony remembers, "brought it in a stack of CDs for Lou to consider singers for *The Raven*. Lou said let's try this one. Hal brought me in and warned me, 'If he doesn't like you, you may just go to the back room and then be escorted out of the studio [laughs].' Hal was pretty nervous, but it worked out fine. We worked on a bunch of songs for that record and it was through them that I met Doug [Wieselman] and all those great horn players."

Antony credits Reed with getting *Bird* released in Europe. "Every label in England passed on *I Am A Bird Now*, every one of them. Devendra, when he got signed, he was on XL like crazy, going, 'Sign Antony, sign Antony.' Hal was on Daniel Miller [of Mute], 'Sign Antony,' and Daniel Miller was like, 'I don't care how many famous people are telling me to sign Antony, I will never sign Antony & The Johnsons.' Lou had just been signed to Sanctuary, and Lou was barking at them, 'Gotta get Antony signed in Europe,' and Sanctuary went to Rough Trade and said, 'Really, give this another listen, you should release this.' Sanctuary at that point half-owned Rough Trade, and Rough Trade said, 'OK, we'll release it.' And then, you know, it won the Mercury Prize, and every label in England was sitting in that room the day that it was declared the best record of the year [laughs]. Every single fucking one of them – and some of them not very politely."

If Antony attracts a wide range of supporters, it's not by design – his vision has stayed consistent. "People want to nail stuff down in order to feel comfortable listening to it. I've been doing very similar work my whole life, and I think my influences are pretty transparent. So on one level it is what it is, if it's mutable enough to fit into different categories, different periods, that doesn't seem essential to the work. But it's fascinating, and it's what carries it along, it's the wind that carries it along." □ Antony & The Johnsons' *Another World* EP is out now on Rough Trade/Secretly Canadian. *The Crying Light* will be released in January.

The Primer

A bimonthly guide to the selected recordings of a specific artist or genre.
This month:

West African psychedelia

Richard Henderson surveys an explosion of fuzzed-out guitar stylings and experimental funk in post-colonial West Africa, fuelled by political independence and pop-cultural revolution. Illustration by **Savage Pencil**

During the late 1960s, in the western portion of sub-Saharan Africa, the ingredients for a literally heady cultural stew were well in hand. The colonial landlords that had controlled countries such as Ghana and Nigeria had been largely expunged from the local landscape, though the infrastructure established by those foreign powers remained to be exploited by an emerging local entertainment industry. Area musicians had long been synthesizing Western styles with indigenous folk music, as evidenced by the efforts of an older generation that in the 1950s had created palmwine music and highlife. But as in the West, a new generation had grown impatient with the music of their forebears, perceiving it as stodgy and polite.

The youth of Anglophone West Africa couldn't have been better placed on history's timeline to receive the superabundance of cultural product from the US and Britain that flooded the region in the wake of The Beatles' ascendance. The local economy was booming, and the sense of a loosening of traditional strictures was in the air. As though predestined, the clothing, music and recalibrated sensibilities of psychedelic culture swept the continent's Atlantic coast, making its presence felt wherever a guitar could be plugged into an amplifier, or newly acquired platform shoes could be displayed in nightclubs.

Of course, the use of the term 'psychedelic' raises questions about cultural context and the availability of drugs, the latter being emblematic of a newly empowered youth culture in the West. The exploration of the antipodes of consciousness was part and parcel of baby boomers seizing and redirecting their own destiny. Could a comparable generation in Africa relate to better living through chemistry? As the late Ronnie Graham observed in his sleevenotes for *Love's A Real Thing: The Funky Fuzzy Sounds Of West Africa* (see below), implicit within African culture was a backlog of centuries of psychotropic experience. The palette of colours confronting rural or urban Africans on a daily basis was more than a little dayglo. Compared to the rayon fibres of Kente cloth, their primary hues pulsating and scrambling perceptions of colour, Bridget Riley's Op Art chessboards or Marcel Duchamp's *Coeurs Volants* seemed quaint, academic and restrained.

The soundtrack of the late 60s youthquake in the West had germinated from musical pollen deposited long before by unwilling transplants from Africa. That numerous versions of psychedelic music from the US and Britain could find receptive audiences in Benin, Nigeria and Ghana speaks volumes about the root musical paradigms implicit within the structure of supposedly path-breaking, anti-formalist pop. From Sly Stone rethinking soul music as a whole new thing, to the expansive jams heard in the ballrooms of San Francisco and Detroit, and the Latin boogaloo emerging from uptown New York, the younger generation of African music fans was waiting with open arms for the latest imported psychedelic sounds from America. All of which would become manifest in the new directions explored by West Africa's local players. Random samples from any of the records mentioned here will reveal at least trace elements of the kind of guitar heroics on offer at rock festivals of the era; in fact, in retrospect, it would be surprising if Hendrix, Santana or even John Cipollina did not leave fingerprints on recordings made by local sensations in Conakry, Lagos or Accra.

In application, some varieties of psychedelia would take root more readily on African soil. British 'head music' was earmarked by a willingness to experiment with the possibilities afforded by the recording studio: reversed and varispeed tape experiments pioneered in musique concrète became the fabric of UK flower power pop. By turns, the otherworldly affect of music embraced by lotus eaters in California seemed to owe more to unusual arrangements and performance. There was of course a third, less heralded thread of psychedelic music that would exert its own peculiar influence in Africa, born of the belated response by inner city blacks in America to new and radical forms of consciousness expansion, as best personified in music by the collected output of George Clinton and the phalanx of chameleon pranksters who filled the ranks of Parliament and Funkadelic.

For all of its volume and distortion and silliness beyond the pale, the P-funk according to Clinton was ultimately rhythm-centric and was indisputably the property of blacks, playing to (often slightly mystified) black audiences. It's interesting to speculate as to the reception that an album such as Funkadelic's 1971 *Maggot Brain*, with its loose-limbed trance rhythms and chanted choruses, might have received among customers in a Bamako record store. It stands to reason that the excesses of Eddie Hazel's wooly, nonsequitur guitar solos, each one an encomium of crazed rapture, might play well to audiences that had recently wriggled free of colonial suppression.

To some degree, this is the stuff of conjecture, but not by much. Inexpensive music technology had made its presence felt in West Africa, both for audience members who could now access turntables and records, and for the performers themselves, free to experiment with the hybridizing of previously acoustic melodies and the ubiquitous sounds of popular Western acts, and all too willing to grab the power afforded by amplification. And P-funk represented what John Storm Roberts, writing in his seminal book *Black Music Of Two Worlds*, refers to as "the total artform – music, dance, costume and visual art combined". Such an artform has distinguished deeply African-rooted performers in the US, be it Sun Ra's Arkestra or James Brown's Famous Flames. Roberts notes that such all-consuming expression is nothing less than a show of self-assertiveness necessary for people who had long been denied the chance to express themselves.

Sir Victor Uwaifo (right) with King Page, circa early 70s

Courtesy Soundway (Uwaifo) Duncan Booker

Looking at the images of West African youth captured by Malian photographer Malick Sidibe during the boom years of the late 60s and early 70s, one senses the impact of psychedelic culture on a young crowd recently emancipated. The clothes say it all: chequered loon pants, platforms, Edwardian-cut suits with ties cut wide from the loudest fabrics available. Whether at house parties, at the beach or on the dance floor, teenagers clutch the sleeves of favourite records, flashing the artwork at Sidibe in a show of pride. The enthusiasm for the music of the day and the fashions that coat-tailed along with those sounds inhabits each exposure made by Sidibé in clubs such as Les Famous Flames, Les Bee Gees or Club Nouvelle Vague.

Of course, the zest and sartorial flair shown by West African music fans was shadowed by the inevitable swing of history's pendulum. European rulers were sent packing, only to be replaced in time by military governments of an equally repressive nature, often worse. Club culture would shatter and evanesce, enthusiasm for Western culture became subject to official censure. Just as Sidibe's images document the unfettered enjoyment of new styles of music and clothing, so do many of these records preserve a time when music making existed in an atmosphere of comparative freedom, when the availability of items as basic as guitar strings was taken for granted. Suffice to say, it would not always remain so.

Sir Victor Uwaifo

Ekasso - Modern Music Of African Folklore

Philips LP, early 1970s

Ekasso - Talk Of The Town Vol 2

Philips LP, 1973

In the late 1970s, any curious American or European browsing the racks of the few record shops in New York, London or Paris then stocking imported African music were doubtless frozen in their tracks at their first sight of the cover artwork of Sir Victor Uwaifo's *Jackpot* album. Shirtless, gripping a double-necked electric guitar in the manner of a man possessed, the packaging suggested an untrammelled force comparable to Jimi Hendrix or Pete Townshend.

The reality, of course, was markedly different, though no less engaging. The Nigerian polymath – in addition to his musical pursuits, Uwaifo's output encompasses poetry, sculpture and painting as well as arts administration – has alternately entertained and puzzled his audience since the 1960s. Though the average Uwaifo song, were such a thing to exist, is made from the same mannerly stuff as the previous generation's highlife or the gentle sway of palmwine music, his music is marked by distinctive, declamatory vocals, the main thrust of a song's lyrics described to the audience/listener by Sir Victor as his group settles into the groove: *"This is a song/About the Mother Witch..."* His heavily processed guitar, an amalgam of echo repeats and overdriven signal, soon takes prominence and the listeners become aware that they are in the presence of a singular entity. An Uwaifo guitar solo typically is an excuse for free play along the length and breadth of the fretboard, with multiple octave leaps part of the furnishings.

West African performers often create distinct genres, of which they would just as soon be regarded as the sole practitioners. Sir Victor Uwaifo is no exception, having devoted a number of his 70s albums to the elaboration of a style of his own devising, known as ekassa. Their rhythms based on the ceremonial music used when new kings are crowned in the country of Benin, Uwaifo's ekassa singles and the LP that first collated his early 70s hits (*Ekasso - Modern Music Of African Folklore*) found favour with a public hungry for novelty. Often as not, Uwaifo and his various groups (The Titlbits, The Melody Maestroes) essayed melodies familiar to older fans of palmwine and highlife forms, suffused with gentility and implicit calm. But then Sir Victor would invariably launch into a raga-like solo on his twin-necked axe, snapping the whammy bar to produce violently misshapen chords, all the while punishing a wah-wah pedal with his platform sole. In his sleevenotes for the Soundway label's recent, and excellent, Uwaifo retrospective, *Guitar-Boy Superstar 1970–76*, Miles Cleret notes that Sir Victor's music "is refreshingly positive and unpolitical in its outlook... there's an amazing amount of joy [in Uwaifo's songs]." He goes on to suggest, with commendable restraint, that Sir Victor's unique guitar playing is "a little psychedelic". He might have said the same of a Syd Barrett solo album, for about the same reasons.

Another example of Uwaifo's ekassa ethos, 1973's *Talk Of The Town Vol 2*, freights more of the elements – placid vocals characteristic of highlife, guitar technique that melded extremes of string bending and rudely cuffed chords. Ferfisa organ vamps that might have been lifted from ? And The Mysterians – that mark him as a genuine iconoclast. His distinctive stance, consistent throughout his career and all the more riveting for being so, is unimpeachable, despite his evincing slavish devotion to Hendrix and a magpie's delight in appropriating funk and soul tropes.

Prince Nico & Rockafil Jazz

Sweet Mother

Decca LP 1976

Given pause to wonder where the wretched excesses of psychedelic and glam culture go to die, one could do worse than to suppose that Western Africa – specifically Nigeria – functions as an elephant's graveyard for platform boots, white vinyl in particular, and curiously appointed, garishly painted Japanese knock-offs of classic American guitars, albeit ones now outfitted with numerous extra pickups and switches. Evidence in support of this hypothesis may be gleaned from the photography that graces the packaging of albums by Prince Nico Mbarga and Rockafil Jazz, such as his mid-70s triumph, *Sweet Mother*. Beginning with a wooden xylophone during childhood, Prince Nico quickly discovered the scope

Prince Nico & Rockafil Jazz, circa 1976

of his own musical aptitude and switched to playing guitar. Not unusually for inhabitants of a continent routinely wracked by civil strife, Mbarga's family emigrated to the Republic of Cameroon. Returning to his native Nigeria, Prince Nico scored a residency at the Plaza Hotel in Onitsha, site of the giant market that serves as common ground occupied by members of different tribes, where migrants newly arrived from the Nigerian bush go in search of city employment. Prince Nico's style was enriched by the cultural scrimmage of Onitsha, characteristics of highlife as played by both Nigerians and Ghanaians would remain central to the style he founded, which he called panko music, all lilting guitar interplay, percolating drums set in extended song formats, and lyrics often sung in pidgin English (for increased market penetration).

Sweet Mother sold consistently for two years throughout Africa. Its success ensured it received an American release via the Rounder label, they also licensed the follow-up, *Free Education In Nigeria*. This, too, features relentlessly peppy song readings underpinned by multiple upper register guitar parts. Despite losing half of his group in 1983, owing to a government-mandated alien expulsion order, Prince Nico rallied and continued his musical activities until his untimely death in a 1997 motorcycle accident. By this point, he had become a successful hotelier, The Sweet Mother Hotel in Calabar being one of his establishments.

Geraldo Pino
Heavy, Heavy, Heavy
Retro Afric CD 2005

Included on the Kone label's 2001 compilation *Afro Rock*, and used as the title for an earlier Kona compilation of obscure Afro-funk cuts, "Heavy, Heavy, Heavy" is the immediately memorable signature-in-song of Sierra Leone's Geraldo Pino, a guitarist and group leader whose influence was felt by a young Fela (still using his 'colonial' surname of Ransome Kuti), but whose own reputation failed to last beyond the period of his greatest popularity in the 1960s and 70s. The sound of Pino's group was consistent, with drawbar organ timbres familiar to fans of Jimmy McGriff paired with staccato wah-wah guitar worthy of inclusion on a Pam Grier blaxploitation soundtrack. Pino and his group raised the bar for stage presentation and technology at a time when many African groups felt lucky to share a single microphone; Fela's Koola Lobitos were among the envious onlookers. The retrospective disc issued by Retro'Afric contains studio recordings and a live set, with the full gamut of Pino's hyper-funky jams and socially conscious lyrics on display throughout to winning effect. Unfortunately, no recordings by Pino with his later psychedelic outfit, The Plastic Jems, seem to have survived.

Atakora Manu
Afro Highlife
Ambassador/Makossa LP mid-1970s
Disko Hi-Life
Ambassador/Makossa LP mid-1970s

Little is known about Atakora Manu, but he had two of his 70s albums, *Afro Highlife* and *Disko Hi-Life*, released in the West by the US Makossa label. Both albums are cut from the same congenial, prim cloth, the rhythms, melodies and vocal performances harkening back to a more gentle era of highlife. These albums share qualities with the earlier iteration of a style that originated in Ghana during the 1920s and soon spread to Nigeria and other neighbouring countries, the highlife made popular by performers such as AB Crentsil and ET Mensah. What distinguishes the brand of highlife played by Atakora Manu is its use of synthesizer, each of the songs heard here has a bubbling monophonic sequence at its core, like an amazingly laidback African version of The Who's "Baba O'Riley". Ganged to the electronic component is the 3/2 clave rhythm that is both the essence of highlife and one of Africa's most potent musical exports, forming the basis of much Afro-Cuban music native to the Caribbean and beyond.

Tony Allen Plays With Africa 70
No Accommodation For Lagos
Phonogram LP 1978
Tony Allen & The Afro Messengers
No Discrimination
Phonogram LP 1979

Fela Anikulapo-Kuti (who was the subject of his own Primer in *The Wire* 234) has, in death, been exceeded the praise and scholarship commensurate with his achievement as the best known exponent of Afrobeat, a succinct response to the flood of American R&B releases that all but smothered local music trends in West Africa in the late 60s and early 70s. But the welding of James Brown's proto-funk moves to Nigerian polyrhythms as the foundation for social commentary in song was anything but the work of an individual. All the members of Fela's Africa 70 group contributed to Afrobeat's ultimate shape – considered from one angle among the many available, the horn charts of Tunde Williams added critical dimension and shading to his leader's vision, and the reissue by the Honest Jons label of Williams's lost solo LP, *Mr Big Mouth*, affords a welcome perspective on group effort within Africa 70.

From its inception, Tony Allen's drumming was the rock upon which Afrobeat was built. Just as Congolese musicians filtered the hysteria out of salsa

Tony Allen, circa 1979

to create the cooler, more linear grooves of soukous, so Allen refined the backbeats heard on Brown's King label 45s imported from America, fusing these with the kind of patterns that might be heard during Hausa tribal boxing matches, where massed percussionists provide live scores for tribal spectator sports.

Allen's first solo albums, such as *Jealousy* and *Progress*, both released in the mid-70s, harnessed Africa 70's firepower to virtually clone Fela's own work with the group. When dissent became manifest within the group's ranks, with Fela's direction becoming scattered or draconian by turns, Allen issued solo work of increasingly quixotic men, though no less compelling than his earlier releases. At points during both *No Accommodation For Lagos* and *No Discrimination*, a reductionist ethos seems the order of the day, with Afrobeat torn down to its bare essentials in the course of a song's progress. Spare arrangements percolate beneath call-and-response vocals, expressions of undisguised rage modulated by the cool facade common to African performers.

As with every rhythm track he crafted for Fela's various guitar armies, Allen's solo albums are distinguished by jagged, angular meters that resolve into unstoppable grooves over the course of several minutes. The interplay of shekere and clavé and scratched, slack guitar strings first materialises in fragments, which coalesce into full group vamps, the Tunde Williams-led horn sections dovetailing seamlessly with Allen's interlocking percussion. Were proper notation available for a track such as "No Discrimination", with its squelching synthesizer leads being the icing on a cake of many layers, the charts would probably resemble an Op-print Marimekko fabric of late 60s vintage.

Gaspar Lawal
Ajomasé
Hot Cap LP 1980
Abio'sunni
Hot Cap LP 1981

Though he moved from his native Nigeria to London in the 1960s, percussionist Gaspar Lawal has maintained a strong spiritual and stylistic connection to the sounds of his birthplace. His first two solo LPs, only individual tracks from which have been issued on CD, are landmark efforts in the twin realms of cross-cultural fusion and, more important to the thesis of this survey, African rhythm and sensibility steered into the fringe areas of consciousness. All of which is especially noteworthy for a drummer-for-hire who lists sessions with Barbra Streisand (!), Steve Stills and The Rolling Stones on his CV. He also participated in keyboardist Graham Bond's shortlived group Magick, whose repertoire contained several pieces written in tribute to Aleister Crowley, a hero of Bond's.

Coming out of an extended stretch of studio work, a highlight of which was his role as African rhythm generator on Vivian Stanshall's first solo LP *Men Opening Umbrellas Ahead*, Lawal crafted *Ajomasé* with loving care, releasing it on his own Hot Cap label in the thick of the post-punk maelstrom. The template for both that album and its successor

Gaspar Lawal, circa 1974

King Sunny Adé, circa 1983

Courtesy Strut (Allen); Jak Kilby (Lawal); David Clements (Adé)

Orchestre Poly Rythmo Os Cotonou, circa mid-70s

Abio'sunni involved the sympathetic participation of fellow studio rats such as Colin Bass (aka Sabah Habas Mustapha of 3 Mustaphas 3) and Abdul Tee-Jay, playing a seven-string guitar of his own devising from which he spins off modified guitar ostinati in the manner practised by Congolese string players. The recordings themselves are timeless, perhaps not surprising coming from a session vet of Lawal's pedigree, and were among the earliest of African recordings to incorporate the splashes of reverb and echo central to Jamaican dub. In a better world, the influence of *Ajomase* and *Abio'sunni* would stretch toward the horizon in the manner of the contemporaneous Bowie/Eno Berlin trilogy; as with albums such as *Low* and *Heroes*, Lawal couples rhythmic urgency and a preoccupation with synthetic texture that remains evergreen.

King Sunny Adé & His African Beats
Juju Music
Island LP 1982
Ajoo
Alade LP 1983

King Sunny Adé came by his honorific honestly: a scion of Yoruban royalty in his native Nigeria, he was also the singer/composer/guitarist leading The African Beats through the 1970s and into the early 80s. Ade and group represented all that was immediately seductive in the Yoruba polyrhythms comprising the Nigerian popular music known as juju, and he was a lightning rod for innovation within that form. Within a period of a very few years, Adé expanded the traditional juju ensemble, adding pedal steel guitar and synthesizer, expanding his compositions into extended suites. He seemed to think as an arranger and a colourist in equal measure, draping his once sprightly multiple-guitar ensemble in inky washes of reverb and echo grafted from Jamaican dub.

In time Adé would be remembered not so much for his innovations as for representing a failed marketing effort at the dawn of the 80s, one that heralded his Nigerian sound as the successor to reggae, in the wake of the death of that music's lodestar figure, Bob Marley. More's the pity as Adé's label Island had pinned their hopes on an album – 1982's *Juju Music* – that revisited and improved upon several songs heard on earlier Nigerian releases by The African Beats, the arrangements tighter, the recordings rich with a multi-layered laminate of guitars and talking drums. The album's technical staff included Godwin Logie, French producer Martin Messonier (who helmed all of Adé's Island albums) and Paul 'Groucho' Smykle, noted for his work with The Clash and Grace Jones, who created his own dub stylings by practising with Marley's multi-track master tapes in Island's studios.

The releases created for Ade's home audience stayed true to his leaner, more upbeat sound even as he crafted work of an altogether more ecumenical bent for international markets. But the adaptability and creative restlessness that set him apart from other juju statesmen such as Ebenezer Obey, Shina Peters or Segun Adewale, ultimately spilled over into LPs that only saw release in Nigeria, such as *Ajoo*. Produced by Ketrin Lesevre and released simultaneously with *Synchro System*, Adé's second Island release aimed at Western listeners, *Ajoo* featured extended tracks such as "Gbeyo Gbeyo", in which an armature of interlocking guitar riffs and hand percussion spin weightlessly around a single electronic pulse, the latter as fully trance-inducing and nagging as anything committed to vinyl by Suicide's Martin Rev.

Lijadu Sisters
Double Trouble
Shanachie LP 1984

From their first release in 1969, *Iya Mi Jowa*, Tehinde and Kaiwo Lijadu distinguished themselves as iconoclasts of particularly steely will. They were identical twins recording for a label (Decca West Africa) that was a vestige of Britain's colonial reach in their native Nigeria. Their sound blended funk and reggae with the speech mimicry of talking drum rhythms, the whole works often tossed into dub's sonic abyss. The sisters' energy and multi-lingual delivery succeeded in spite of the recordings that they made in Decca's Lagos studio, which were pale technologically inadequate simulations of their electrifying live act. As captured by film maker Jeremy Marre in 1991 for *Konkombé*, the instalment of his *Beats Of The Heart* World Music documentaries devoted to Nigerian pop, the Lijadus are seen at work in an overheated control room, warring with their staff producer, listening to a typically dispiriting playback. Later, within their own compound, accompanied by acoustic guitar and Yoruba squeeze drum, the sisters effortlessly produce the sound that their records failed time and again to capture. But *Double Trouble*, an American release that anthologises their most successful studio recordings, is consistently engaging and shows their forward-thinking side to best advantage, in contrast with uneven Decca LPs such as *Danger* and *Sunshine*, whose successes are nearly obscured by poor A&R decisions that steer the sisters toward saccharine material and abrasive sound mixes. In the late 80s, the Lijadu Sisters would move to Brooklyn, New York's African enclave. Regrettably, despite playing out sporadically at Manhattan clubs, this move seems to have occasioned the end of their recording career.

Courtesy Analog Africa

As writer Eve Babitz has pointed out in her chronicles of echt-bohemia, one is rarely aware of living in a Golden Age until that time has passed. Fortunately, it's all too easy to recognise that these are salad days for compilations of the sounds that moved hip Africans onto the floor and into altered states during the late 1960s and into the 70s. The following anthologies survey musicians and trends reflecting the tastes of urban West Africa in an era of cultural and political upheaval.

Assalam Aleikoum Africa Vol 1: Popular And Progressive Music Of West Africa
Antilles LP 1976
Assalam Aleikoum Africa Vol 2: Traditional And Modern Folk Music Of West Africa
Antilles LP 1976
With its hand-tinted colours, the cover of the first of these two discs evokes a colonial past, but the subject at its centre embodies modernity of a sort long-established in Africa by the time of these two albums' release in the mid-70s: a villager stands proud within his compound, holding what looks like a knock-off of a Rickenbacker electric guitar, his native garb offset by a pair of platform boots. These two compilations, produced by Catherine Oro and Albert Loudes, predated by a couple of years John Storm Roberts's *Africa Dances* anthology. That album surveyed the amplified pop forms of an entire continent, but both instalments of *Assalam Aleikoum Africa* confined themselves to groups recording in Côte d'Ivoire, revealed here as a lodestar state.

Though the two volumes ostensibly separate pop and folk music, there is considerable stylistic overlap between both discs. Wah-wah pedals are brought to bear on folkloric melodies and severely distorted electric guitars rub up against the fibrous timbres of indigenous balafon malletophones. Vincent Nguni & Afro-Train's "Ode To Hendrix" is a downtempo tribute, appropriating riffs from "Hear My Train A Comin'" around which Nguni – recording in exile, as fondness for weed was frowned upon in his native Cameroon – bends notes and slams power chords.

Love's A Real Thing: The Funky Fuzzy Sounds Of West Africa
Luaka Bop CD 2005
This collection appeared as the third volume in a series of retrospective releases dubbed *World Psychedelic Classics* by label proprietor David Byrne. The disc contains an insanely successful selection of cuts that freighted volume, anti-formalist tendencies and rhythmic dexterity in equal measure. Byrne commissioned Ronnie Graham, author of much essential scholarship on Afro-pop, to write the sleevenotes, a stroke of genius on a par with Byrne getting experimental film maker Bruce Conner to create videos for *My Life In The Bush Of Ghosts*. Graham's notes describe hallucinatory jams in 60s and 70s West Africa, and approach the status of a defining text on the subject.

Love's A Real Thing is a weirdly incandescent set that successfully prods aficionados into rethinking the context and influences threaded within the pop music of West Africa. Among the discoveries: a rare 12" dance mix of "Awon Ojise Oluwa", perhaps Gasper Lawel's finest moment as a solo artist; the loose-limbed beats and weedy *Nuggets*-style Farfisa organ that define the title track by Super Eagles, one of a dozen groups representing what Graham calls "black-roots modernizers ... on the move", and Ofo The Black Company's "Allah Wakbarr", which reveals a deeply rooted love of all things Funkadelic, especially the thrashed timbre of Eddie Hazel's lead guitar. Listening to moves lifted from George Clinton's addled consciousness being reframed by African players in the midst of their own cultural revolution is to know both high-decibel bliss and a stripe of unsettling ambiguity perhaps unavailable by other means.

Nigeria 70: The Definitive Story Of Funky Lagos
Strut 2×CD+DVD 2001
Nigeria 70: Lagos Jump – Original Heavyweight Afrobeat, Highlife And Afro-funk
Strut CD 2008
Before Luaka Bop dropped its own take on an altered Africa, Strut's *Nigeria 70* helped to crystallise the twinned influences of suddenly available and affordable music technology and the influx of psychedelic sounds from the West.

The discs are sequenced in the manner of a documentary film, with distinct epochs of Nigerian funk highlighted on its first two CDs. The Funkees, with their painfully tight synchrony between guitars and brass, turn up with a strident "Dancing Time". The group pulled, with equal force, in opposite directions; on the one pole by the lure of all that was racy and cool on funk discs turning up from the US, on the other by the innate politeness that is so deeply rooted in local character. The earliest chapter of Fela's career is represented by the Koola Lobitos group, and then comes "Chop 'N' Quench", an early 70s instrumental masterpiece from Africa 70, with a horn section as glossy and slick as the soundtrack to a Canadian beer commercial. One half of the short-lived but unforgettable juju group Shina Adewale, Sir Shina Peters brings his clipped guitar phrasing to bear on "Agboju Logun", the song supported by weirdly tinny horns and genuinely nasty synth accents.

The third disc is a DVD that footnotes the era with audio verite footage. Included are interviews with Cream drummer Ginger Baker, who moved to Lagos in the 70s, building a recording studio, assembling the supergroup Salt and effectively flushing all his royalties from the previous decade down the toilet. He is able to laugh about it all, which in a strenge way is comforting.

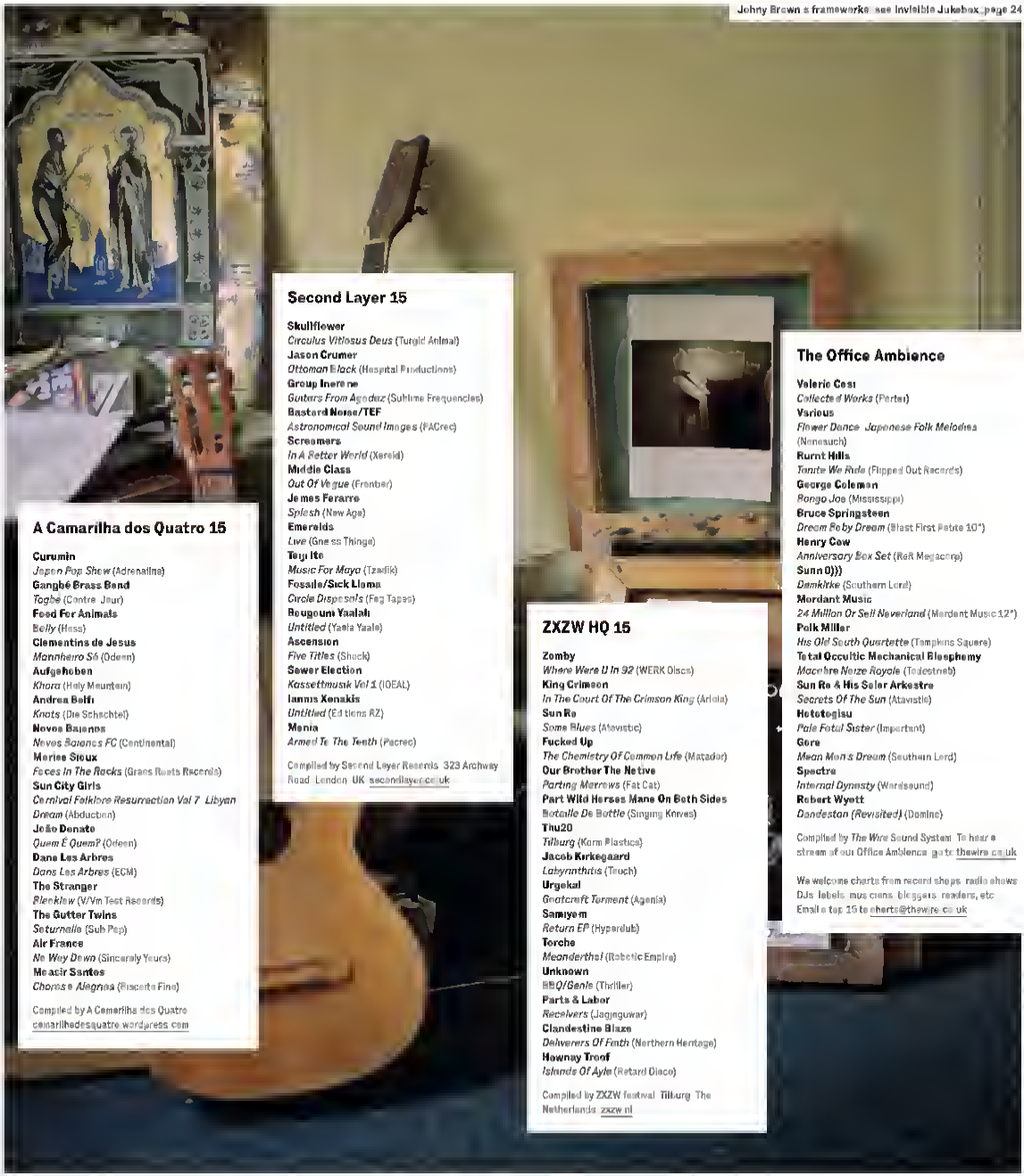
After its untimely disappearence and subsequent reorganisation, Strut recently resurfaced with a *Nigeria 70* sequel subtitled *Lagos Jump*. The compilation creates a unified portrait of the varied musical strands unfurling from the clubs and studios of Lagos, reaching back as far as the 1920s. Fans of Prince Nico Mbarga's battalion of electric guitars will enjoy the amplified spray of Ashanti Afrika Jah's "Onyame", a gospel number sung in Twi dialect. Chief Checker's cod-reggae is worthy of inclusion mainly for the photo reproduced in the accompanying booklet, which shows him dressed in full pimp regalia.

African Scream Contest. Raw And Psychedelic Afro Sounds From 70s Benin And Togo
Analog Africa CD 2008
The Analog Africa label emerged from the blog of the same name, one of a number of sharity blogs to have emerged in recent years offering free downloads of obscure relics from the 70s heyday of African funk (see also Awesome Tapes From Africa, Sea Never Dry and Voodoo Funk). *African Scream Contest* is a decidedly deluxe package, with a hefty booklet containing pocket biographies of otherwise undocumented stars of the scene, much vintage photography and an account of Benin's premiere music label, Albarika Store. The order of the day is frenetic rhythms, a level of distortion that improves one's outlook on life, and, generally speaking, raw power of a magnitude usually associated with proto-Metal outfits from Detroit. Each of the groups here (including Ouinsou Corneille & Black Santiago, which was once the subject of a brilliant compilation issued by Original Music, a label now regrettably defunct) provide vivid testimony to a time when recording and playing gigs was the stuff of an incandescent scene. What's more, the standout group on the compilation, Orchestre Poly-Rythmo De Cotonou, has recently been the subject of its own retrospective disc, *The Vodoun Effect: Funk & Sato From Benin's Obscure Labels 1973–1975*, another stellar revival by Analog Africa.

Nigeria Rock Special: Psychedelic Afro-Rock And Fuzz Funk In 1970s Nigeria
Soundway CD 2008
It only takes a few notes of the blistering solo unfurled by the guitarist from The Wings (no, not that Wings) to realise the truth in the packaging of this wonderful collection. Many recent surveys of African music that purport to offer psychedelic content are usually peddling the same old highlife singles. This Soundway collection delivers on its title, crammed as it is with deep, though not entirely Americanised funk, screaming guitar leads and spooky, reverb-drenched vocals sung with the intensity of Gregorian chant. The Funkees actually sing the praises of "Acid Rock", despite their track's strong resemblance to James Brown's "I've Got Ants In My Pants". Yet another small marvel from Ofo The Black Company, in the form of "Eniaro", features a guitar solo that ranges from languid to nakedly intense, drawing another parallel between Lagos circa 1974 and a late 60s San Francisco sound defined by the freeflowing improvisations of John Cipollina and Jerry Garcia. □

Charts

Johny Brown's frameworks: see Invisible Jukebox, page 24



A Camarilha dos Quatro 15

Curumin
Japan Pop Show (Adrenaline)
Gangbé Brass Band
Tagbé (Contre Jour)
Food For Animals
Belly (Hess)
Clementina de Jesus
Mannheiro Só (Odeon)
Aufgehoben
Khora (Holy Mountain)
Andrea Belfi
Knots (Die Schachtel)
Novos Baianos
Novos Baianos FC (Continental)
Marise Sioux
Faces In The Rocks (Grass Roots Records)
Sun City Girls
Carnival Folklore Resurrection Vol 7: Libyan Dream (Abduction)
João Donato
Quem É Quem? (Odeon)
Dans Les Arbres
Dans Les Arbres (ECM)
The Stranger
Blacklow (V/Vm Test Records)
The Gutter Twins
Saturnalia (Sub Pop)
Air France
No Way Down (Sincerely Yours)
Moacir Santos
Choros e Alegrias (Biscoito Fino)

Compiled by A Camarilha dos Quatro
camarilhadosquatro.wordpress.com

Second Layer 15

Skullflower
Circulus Vitiosus Deus (Turgid Animal)
Jason Crumer
Ottoman Black (Hospital Productions)
Group Inerene
Guitars From Agadez (Sublime Frequencies)
Bastard Noise/TEF
Astronomical Sound Images (PACrec)
Screamers
In A Better World (Xeroid)
Middle Class
Out Of Vogue (Frontier)
James Ferarro
Splash (New Age)
Emeralds
Live (Gneiss Things)
Tsuji Ito
Music For Maya (Tzadik)
Fossils/Sick Llama
Circle Disposals (Fag Tapes)
Rougouni Yaalali
Untitled (Yaala Yaala)
Ascension
Five Titles (Shock)
Sewer Election
Kassettmusik Vol 1 (IDEAL)
Iannis Xenakis
Untitled (Editions RZ)
Mania
Armed To The Teeth (Pacrec)

Compiled by Second Layer Records, 323 Archway Road, London, UK. secondlayer.co.uk

ZXZW HQ 15

Zomby
Where Were U In 92 (WERK Discs)
King Crimson
In The Court Of The Crimson King (Ariola)
Sun Ra
Some Blues (Atavistic)
Fucked Up
The Chemistry Of Common Life (Matador)
Our Brother The Native
Parting Marrows (Fat Cat)
Part Wild Horses Mane On Both Sides
Bataille De Bottle (Singing Knives)
Thu20
Tilburg (Korm Plastics)
Jacob Kirkegaard
Labyrinthitis (Touch)
Urgekal
Goatcraft Torment (Agenia)
Samiyam
Return EP (Hyperdub)
Torche
Meanderthal (Robotic Empire)
Unknown
BBQ/Genie (Thriller)
Parts & Labor
Receivers (Jagjaguwar)
Clandestine Blaze
Deliverers Of Faith (Northern Heritage)
Hawnay Troof
Islands Of Ayla (Retard Disco)

Compiled by ZXZW festival, Tilburg, The Netherlands. zxzw.nl

The Office Ambience

Valerie Cosi
Collected Works (Porter)
Various
Flower Dance: Japanese Folk Melodies (Nonesuch)
Burnt Hills
Tonite We Ride (Flipped Out Records)
George Coleman
Bongo Joe (Mississippi)
Bruce Springsteen
Dream Baby Dream (Blast First Petite 10")
Henry Cow
Anniversary Box Set (ReR Megacorp)
Sunn O)))
Demikirke (Southern Lord)
Mordant Music
24 Million Or Sell Neverland (Mordant Music 12")
Polk Miller
His Old South Quartette (Tompkins Square)
Total Occultic Mechanical Blasphemy
Macabre Noize Royale (Todestrieb)
Sun Ra & His Solar Arkestra
Secrets Of The Sun (Atavistic)
Hototogisu
Pale Fatal Sister (Important)
Gore
Mean Man's Dream (Southern Lord)
Spectre
Internal Dynasty (Wordsound)
Robert Wyatt
Dandestan (Revisited) (Domino)

Compiled by *The Wire* Sound System. To hear a stream of our Office Ambience, go to: thewire.co.uk

We welcome charts from record shops, radio shows, DJs, labels, musicians, bloggers, readers, etc. Email a top 15 to charts@thewire.co.uk

Joss McKinley

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Soundcheck A–Z

This month's selected CDs, vinyl and downloads

Angel
Hedonism
Editions Mego CD
The making of *Hedonism* began as long ago as 1999, a collaboration between Dirk Dresselhaus and Ilpo Vaisänen, with Hildur Gudnadottir joining forces with the duo midway through, underscoring these soundworks with heavy, black cello. *Hedonism* is divisible into three parts. The opening four tracks were recorded in Dresselhaus's Berlin studio, and represent the urban component of the album. The opening moments of the first track "Holding Loose" are among its most scorching, panning like an electric storm during a city blackout across the speakers, practically throwing you from your chair. The subsequent pieces then settle into a moody post-nuclear smoulder, less eventful but still too hot to touch. The mid-section, opening with "Dropping The Ego", consists of pieces of musique concrète, but this is concrète wrenched from the soundlabs, abused, hurled down stairwells and bashed about in the hostile city outdoors.

The final two tracks were recorded at Vaisänen's cottage in Karttula in northern Finland and represent the rural wing of the album. That said, the faint samples of insects, fish eating mosquitos and birds stand no chance against the rising liquid metal wall of electronics which drowns them out. "Hornet" appears to represent hazy, bucolic quiet, but the air of tension it preserves is justified as, at its conclusion, it is strafed by the roar of low-flying jet aircraft. Despite the bias in favour of the black and the noise and the metal, this is a powerful collection, crying out to be 'installed' in either country or city.
David Stubbs

Lotte Anker/Sylvie Courvoisier/Ikue Mori
Alien Huddle
Intakt CD

H-alpha
Red Sphere
Skirl CD
The link between these two releases is the presence of laptop artist Ikue Mori, working on both in a more jazz context. The trio of *Alien Huddle* have produced a concise album, with the 11 tracks taking on the character of vignettes. Lotte Anker has the most obvious jazz pedigree, having worked with David Murray, Marilyn Mazur, Craig Taborn and Gerald Cleaver, as well as the Copenhagen Art Ensemble, so it's strange to find her saxophone tone rather curdled and classical. The classical connection is more expected from Sylvie Courvoisier, whose piano style has affinities with post-serial composition, as well as free improv.

The dark, brooding "Night Owl" is characteristic in its lowing saxophone and percussion effects – I assume – from Ikue Mori. But I'm never sure what to make of her rather literalist soundscapes, which recall too readily first-base choices of water, bells, birds and sci-fi burblings. She began as a drummer, then developed the drum machine into an artistic voice, but her focus on laptop in the last decade has not always been convincing. However, the other players' contributions are strong enough to mute these concerns.

Similar comments apply to the H-alpha trio – a downtown collective of Briggan Krauss on alto and baritone saxophones, Jim Black on drums with Mori again on laptop. Krauss is a saxophonist I've admired since hearing him with Steve Bernstein's Sex Mob. Taught by Julien Priester among others, his taste can't be criticised – for a year at high school he listened to Arthur Blythe's *Lenox Avenue Breakdown* and Coltrane's *First Meditations* every day. *Red Sphere* is at its best when the Krauss–Black axis dominates. The saxophonist's slash and burn technique on alto is compelling, though he's powerful on baritone too – his edgy playing gives the album a fierce splendour.
Andy Hamilton

Roland Auzet
Percussion(s)
Mode 3×CD+DVD+Book
Mode Records boss Brian Brent has always been a man obsessed with formats. He was a pioneer in presenting New Music on DVD and now combines audio, visual and printed matter (the latter provided by French publisher Tschnann) in a new Mode series called Inactuelles. Each slipcase-box will focus on a composer or theme, and this first instalment surveys innovative music for percussion played by French percussionist Roland Auzet.

At the heart of the set sits Iannis Xenakis, which seems only proper. The DVD documents Auzet's performances of *Psappha* (1975) and *Rébonds* (1988) and the visuals greatly increase our understanding of how Xenakis's music demands physicality and dainty precision. In the book, Auzet describes Xenakis's importance as a conceptualiser of percussion music as "launching the debate of form and content. Percussion is not rhythmical, not folkoric, is not exotic." In other words Xenakis liberated percussion from being a colouristic effect and found an approach to pitch and rhythm that matched square pegs with square holes.

The earliest piece included, the 1952 *Concerto De Chambre* for marimba and nine players by French neoclassical composer Darius Milhaud, desperately tries to slot square pegs into round holes. Milhaud's melodic pomp world have idiomatic purpose on a string or wind instrument, but plods inelegantly against the marimba's brittle attack. But even when Xenakis uses percussion in a more representational way as in his 1987 *Kassandra* for bass voice and percussion, an extra scene added to his theatrical piece *Orestea*, the thunderous ritual of his writing feels authentic, material and structure are interchangeable.

Edmund Campion's *Losing Touch* (1994) for vibraphone and electronics begins with an electronic treatment of the vibraphone that transforms its wobbly tones into tiny glissandi figures that are put into a duologue with the live vibraphone. Keren Tanaka's *Metallic Crystal* (1995) also involves electronics, this time deployed to transform base metal percussion into kaleidoscopic timbres, other composers, like Carlos Roque Alsina and Yoshihisa Taira, use conventional means while pushing at conventional techniques. Most intriguing, however, is Pierre Jodlowski's *Mecano* (2004) which embeds motors and metronomes inside a battery of percussion instruments. The music ticks like a faulty mechanical object as the real-time percussionist adds a humane dimension – the grain of percussion redefined.
Philip Clark

Kevin Ayers
What More Can I Say
Reel Recordings CD
In 1969, Kevin Ayers was a well-travelled blond with a knack for moody pop songs and a pedigree that included a stint in The Soft Machine, but seemed to actively thwart any opportunities to be a bone fide rock star. Ayers's brilliant song collection *Joy Of A Toy* included tunes in Prog-ish 13/8 time signatures, and one sung in the Maley language. *Shooting At The Moon* saw him cavorting with Lol Coxhill and David Bedford, and tacking extended free improv sections onto world-be rock anthems like "Lunatics Lament". Still, it is precisely because of the complexity of his early solo work – Ayers's equal facility with dark pop tunes, jazzy breaks and non-Anglo singalongs – that these records are so well loved.

What More Can I Say not only adds to the limited quantity of material available from this period in Ayers's career, but offers something arguably better: an unheard batch of early 70s demo tapes and home recordings, including extensive spoken commentary and explanations of the song structures – for whom it isn't always clear. Most of the recordings are simple demos, featuring Ayers accompanying himself on guitar, others are (slightly) more advanced, with vocal overdubs and guest appearances by Bedford, Robert Wyatt and Archie Legget. The tunes generally showcase Ayers's more romantic singer-songwriter side, though there are surprises like the bluesy instrumental "Crystal Clear" (a backing track?) and a droney, almost Philip Glass-style rendition of "Dreaming Doctor". Along with the newly added liner notes, which are crucial to understanding the context of these recordings and Ayers's life at the time (the hippy flat in Notting Hill, the artist friends dropping in and out, the druggie hangers-on), this is essential for any fan of Ayers's music.
Dave Mandl

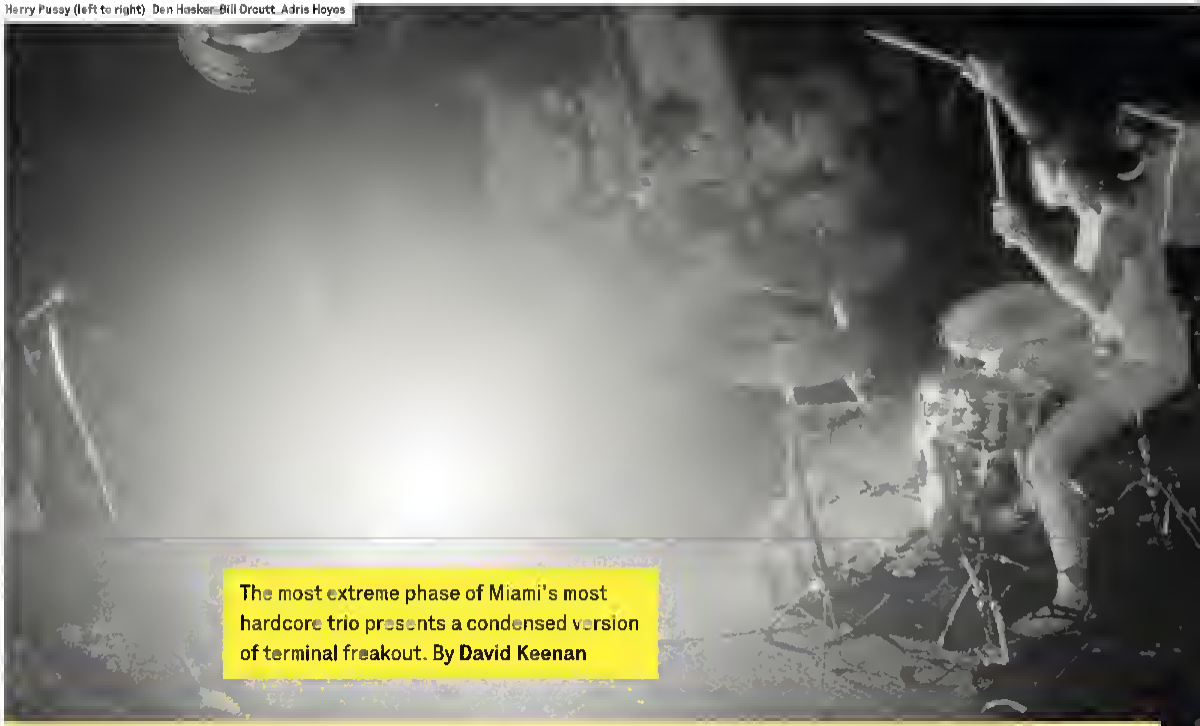
B12
Archive Volume 1
B12 2×CD
Archive Volume 2
Various
B12 2×CD
Mike Golding and Steve Rutter were loners of the very early days of British bedroom Techno, inspired by the sleek electronic sounds then emerging from Detroit. Unlike producers working in and around Sheffield's bleep 'n' bass scene such as Nightmares On Wax, LFO or even Richard H Kirk, they worked largely apart from any club scene or kindred spirits. While the material they released as B12 and on their own label doesn't have the twisting torque of truly functional dancefloor based music, their rabid Techno-philia created one of the most vivid sound palettes of early 90s electronic music. After returning to production earlier this year, B12 have now opened their archive to the digital domain for the first time, with a projected seven double CDs due for release on a month by month basis, spanning all 98 tracks released on the label in transpotterly style.

The music on their label emerged fully formed, with complex string clusters, dense waves of electro bass and high tensile percussion on "Metropolis", the first track from their 1991 debut EP. "Weightless Condition" from 1992 is even more assured where they make analogue synth chords brood like Bernard Herrmann. *Archive Volume 2* features some of the most soniful work of Kirk DeGiorgio's As One alias, plus the B12 tracks which late caught the ear of Warp Records.

The work of Techno purists like B12 echoes the British jazz buff's obsession with US hard bop of the late 50s. In each case observing the creative epicentre from afar created an obsessive focus on particular tones and textures, whether Hank Mobley's tenor sax tone or Derrick May's synths. If the idea of seven double CDs of the B12 label's material seems excessive – and it surely is – it's exactly the kind of attention to detail which created some of the subtlest hues of 90s electronica.
Derek Walmsley

Bökan! Musics In The Margin
Various
Sub Rosa CD
There is something voyeuristic about witnessing the intense teenage exuberance inhabiting this curious Sub Rosa-produced compilation. Collecting 29 tracks made at youth workshops held in the Belgian town of Blicquy, the CD features young men without prior musical knowledge who were given access to instruments, a microphone and recording technology.

The three tracks signed 'David', "Harry Potter & Rocky", "Hahahehaha" and "Transe", consist mostly of menacingly persistent lo-fi grunts and guitar experiments. They are so confessional in quality that listening to it closely feels



Harry Pussy (left to right) Dan Hosker Bill Orcutt Adris Hoyos

The most extreme phase of Miami's most hardcore trio presents a condensed version of terminal freakout. By David Keenan

Harry Pussy
You'll Never Play This Town Again: Live, Etc 1997
Load CD

All high energy music tends towards the omega point that would see it escape form altogether where the jam is the thing and the song a mere excuse for getting there Even hardcore the most doctrinaire of rebel musics, planted the seeds of its own overthrow in its urge to accelerate with each successive wave of groups battling the last in terms of speed of execution, of hyper-exaggerated moves, in order to be the ones that even time couldn t hold back Where psychedelia was all about leaving your body behind hardcore posited a muscular oblivion by way of a punishing physicality, one that went hand-in-hand with a puritanical aesthetic a skinhead form of scourging to ecstasy

Harry Pussy were the most extreme hardcore group of the post-punk era They were hyper everything, hyper fast hyper-crude, hyper-free hyper-dexterous, hyper a-musical They boasted a once-in-a-lifetime line-up straight out of Miami Bill Orcutt on electric guitar a weird film maker and prodigiously talented instrumentalist, Adris Hoyos first-time drummer and vocalist, a goofy tough-attitude chick from Cuba with a feral performance style, and Mark Feehen and Dan Hosker two separate second guitarists the presence of one or the other serving to define the group s two distinct eras

It s the later Hosker-era that this new 42 track compilation of rare and unreleased recordings is drawn from The main difference between the line-ups is that Harry Pussy actually got faster as they evolved tracking the opposite trajectory of normal punk groups When Feehan was playing with them they could still get strung out still play more obviously 'free But by the time of these recordings Harry Pussy were playing 60 second bursts of chaotic rock 'n roll that barbarise whole histories of freakout style from free jazz through classic hardcore, boogie blues Black Flag, Germs, most explicitly through Beefheart, but all hyper-condensed into nitra-kranky riffs that Orcutt plays at hallucinatory speed, compressing Zoot Horn Rollo-style avant confusion into lighting runs and metallic two note knock-outs Hoyos's style is so primitive that it s wildly avant garde, with an instinctive feel for time that confounds the most advanced improvisatory strategies with the most hysterical And her vocals are post-Yoko in the truest sense, not directly informed by her but sharing the same spontaneous energy and a-musical appeal sometimes breaking from songs completely to expand on barely articulated vocal rants and fever pitched bouts of screaming During the Hosker period the whole group existed in a zone that was constantly beyond technique

You'll Never Play This Town Again features some of the best Harry Pussy recordings the *Untitled/Tour/Fuck You* LP, the live 10", the split singles with Pelt and Frosty (what the hell happened to them?) and the *Radiation Nation* single on De Stijl alongside seven unreleased tracks, all expertly remastered. The May 1997 studio tracks are as formally staggering as anything on *Trout Mask Replica* "Ice Cream Man" is "Deli's Car" at four times the speed just as "Smash The Mirror" is "Ella Guru" The tracks are also cut in an extremely appealing audio verite style Hoyos is nasty sarcastic infectiously funny Despite the improvised feel of most of the tracks, Harry Pussy were an ultra-tight performance unit and played actual songs with out-takes and live versions sounding just as rigorously conceived as the originals The live recordings are important both for successfully capturing the insane energy of the group and for including their legendary version of Kraftwerk's "Showroom Dummies", where Orcutt's irresistible "Big Eyed Beans" groove and Hoyos's mad vocals and drums create a reading that s more pneumatic than motorik while spearing the very heart of the tune It s still one of the all-time great cover versions

Teenage Jesus And The Jerks are the group that Harry Pussy most often get compared to, but hearing them covering that group's "Orphans" on a bonus live track (coincidentally the last track from their last live performance), it s clear that Harry Pussy were of a much more rock/roll bent than any of the No Wave groups making music that wasn t so much a refusal of previous rock modes as an exaggerated celebration of all of its most outlaw attributes Of the rest of the unreleased material the most interesting track is "Velvet Pussy" a take on a Velvet Underground-style rocker that sounds uncannily like your dream VU bootleg But it's the officially released material that s the real attraction tracks like "Sex Problem" "Smash The Mirror" and "Chuck!" with Hoyos pulverising time and Orcutt out-stripping it completely The closing extended take on "Smash The Mirror" is one of the great free jazz-inspired electric guitar freakouts up there with The Byrds' "Eight Miles High" Television s live reading of "Fire Engine", The Blue Humans' *Clear To Higher Time* and The Dead C's *Helen Said This*

Harry Pussy formed in 1992 and imploded in 1997, played a bunch of legendarily riotous shows got barred from a whole bunch more, released a string of amazing LPs and 7"s and then disappeared Hoyos is currently married with two children, working in computers living with musician and artist Graham Lambkin and seemingly retired from music Rumours persist of Bill Orcutt making a return to the stage but outside of reports of a shady uncredited 7" nothing has been heard of him since The arc of their career was perfect, the mission truly accomplished, and all that s left is this amazing series of recordings, a body of work that has had a disproportionate effect on the minds, if rarely the actual sound of the underground □

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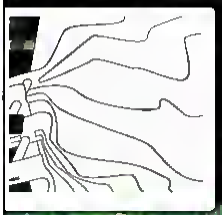

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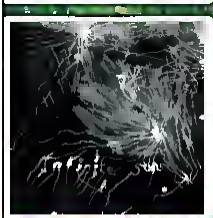

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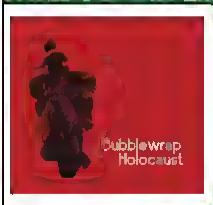

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wrong, like standing in front of your teenage son's bedroom door and hearing events not meant for you. Lolo's "I've Been Worried" has an unhinged quality in common with Jandek and Skip Spence minus those artists' instrumental powers, whereas his vocal on "Le Volume Benjamin" has an echoing intensity resembling a drunk Arthur Russell. The attention-grabbing drillcore of Gregory Ouret Mix ("Free") stands as a complete opposite to Ludwin's drunkard ballad "Dalida" and the whole thing is signed off with "Ambient", monotonous drum beat layer beneath low key chatter.

The gung-ho approach to music displayed on the compilation is impressive; some of the players may never have touched an instrument before, but have plenty of emotion to channel into notes, screams and off-tunes. It works brilliantly as a document of a time and a place, as raw emotional outbursts from a coming generation, but with the music sounding like one personal catharsis after another. It becomes burdensome to listen all the way through.

Anne Hilde Neset

Brightblack Morning Light
Motion To Rejoin
Matador CD/LP/Download

Brightblack Morning Light prowl around the Californian desert like panthers blissed out on weed, crafting languorous two-chord grooves as therapy for harassed urbanites. Childhood friends Rachel Hughes (Rhodes piano) and Naybob Shineywater (guitar and vocals) first performed at an Alabama Green Party benefit. They still foreground environmental issues, and legend says this album was recorded using solar panels. It's an extraordinary sound, a dark agglomeration involving trombones, vibraphones and bass flutes over the rich bedding compost of Hughes's Rhodes. Meanwhile Shineywater's vocals swim in reverb, kept afloat by distinctive backing vocals. There's some elegantly moody muddiness in the ensemble mix – Shineywater toured Europe singing with an Indian arrowhead in his mouth, so is clearly not averse to a spot of distortion – and the whole freak folk shebang conjures up Devendra Banhart outward bound with Mark Hollis's Talk Talk.

Another connoisseur of slow, Will Oldham, was an early advocate, taking BML on tour with him. This is their third album if you include 2004's *Ala colt tucky*, recorded when their name was Brightblack. There's not much variety over these nine tracks, but to hell with variety when you sound this good. "A Rainbow Aims" drifts for nearly ten minutes, evolving dreamily from languid triple time to languid quadruple time. "Past A Weatherbeaten Fencepost" comes complete with faux-vinyl crackle – but long before then the Southern eco-hippy voodoo will have you hooked and supine, and all other music will sound absurdly hectic.

Clive Bell

Peter Brötzmann & Fred Lonberg-Holm
The Brain Of The Dog In Section
Atavistic CD

It's become a cliché to act surprised when Peter Brötzmann, whose *Machine Gun* brought jazz as close as it could get to the barricade-erecting spirit of 68 waxas lyrical. While *The Brain Of The Dog In Section* has its gentle moments, it also reconfirms that, at 67, the German poly-reedist's capacity to sustain improvisations of heir-raising ferocity is undiminished. Even the cover's dire image of a toothy hound about to chomp on its own outsized erection elevates the hackles: macho jazz haters, there's the door.

Brötzmann's partnership with Lonberg Holm dates to January 1997, when they played together in the first version of the Chicago Octet (later Tentet), but this is their first recorded duet. The American cellist's Marshall amp and circle of effects pedals enable him to cut through the larger group's densest tangles, and gestures like the solitary creaks that end their 2002 recording *Signs* reveal his flair for making telling statements when the rest of the ensemble steps back.

His penchant for crafting harshly poetic statements on the fly is retained in this more naked setting. On "Section 1" Lonberg Holm matches Brötzmann's squalls with near-Metal groans and squeals, then raises him with streams of acid electronics that seem to mock the saxophonist's melancholy turns. In "Section 3" he adroitly surrounds Brötzmann's barking tarogato with skeins of woody pizzicato notes and fuzzy static discharges. But the stunner comes in the central section when Brötzmann crafts an Appalachian-sounding air out of tenor multiphonics and his counterpart engages in a moment of jaunty fiddling before stomping once more on the distortion box. Simultaneously grotesque and gorgeous, the moment confirms that Brötzmann can still be genuinely shocking.

Bill Meyer

Eugene Chadbourne & David Sait
Auspicious Fish – Postage Paid Duets Vol 1
Apprise CD

Eugene Chadbourne's guitar improvisations intrigued me when I first heard them at the end of the 1970s. Since then I've found that the appeal of his playing has largely diminished as it has become more familiar. Spidery and dry, it's invariably enlivened by calculated quirkiness that often amounts to a kind of self-subversion. Entertaining enough in the context of Shockabilly – the manic rockabilly splurge he ran during the 1980s with bassist Mark Kramer and drummer David Licht – Chadbourne's mannered eccentricities can elsewhere seem merely indulgent.

Auspicious Fish, though, is pleasingly low-key and antic-free. Chadbourne plays banjo, an instrument that further emphasises that characteristic spiderness and dryness. Canadian improvisor David Sait plays guzheng, a Chinese zither said to be the progenitor of the Japanese koto. Its sound is delicate yet reverberant and the instrument's movable bridges encourage sliding and bent notes. The "Postage Paid" aspect of the title indicates that the musicians were improvising in different places at different times. Chadbourne was on a mountaintop in Basque territory, Sait was in a suburb of Toronto.

The intermediary was John Oswald, who mixed and mastered the project. Oswald, whose judgment in such matters is to be trusted, decided to intersperse three combined duets with three solo extractions from the material he was offered. The resulting six tracks, extending across 72 minutes, have no apparent goal in view apart from taking pleasure in the plink and twang of banjo and guzheng. Weightless doodling rather than ponderous contemplation. A minor pleasure, but a pleasure nonetheless.

Julian Cowley

Loren Chasse
The Footpath
Naturestrip CD

Loren Chasse & Michael Northam
The Otolith
Helen Scarsdale CD

Field recording always seems a rather literal consumption of the experience of place, presenting a "pure" recording of place itself, without extraneous intervention. Loren Chasse's work is worthwhile, at least in complicating this.

The Footpath splices field recordings with recordings of live performances. The sleeve suggests an earthy rusticism with its photograph of a hand attentively tending some stones; the notes listing "dust, mud and wind" as sources – which often seem curiously similar to the sound of a motorway or a passing aircraft. What stops *The Footpath* from falling into the occupational hazard of sound art – tedium – is its dense and often indefinable mass of sound, where picking out particular objects becomes difficult, in a tangle of competing noise. Much of it sticks to a palette of rustic scraping, babbling brooks and trampled leaves, but the less purist moments where non-acoustic sound intrudes largely rescues it from the boredom which always threatens to encroach upon it.

The Otolith – its title referring to the tiny stones in the ear which orientate the body – is a collaboration with Michael Northam. A much more focused, not to mention gnarled creation, it forces the field recordings to coexist with simmering, sometimes unnerving drones, via guitars or toy instruments. The central track "The Spectral Harvest" fuses them to particularly oneiric, blurred effect. The more immediately listenable of the two records, *The Otolith* nonetheless shares a compulsive aversion to drama.

Owen Hatherley

Anne James Chaton & Andy Moor
Le Journaliste
Unsounds CD/Download

DJ /rupture & Andy Moor
Patches
Unsubtable CD

Andy Moor sounds especially at home in polystylistic settings. With The Dogfaced Hermans and The Ex, the Amsterdam-based Scotsman has juggled extended post-punk guitar techniques, folk melodies, African rhythms and free jazz blowouts; more recently he's interacted successfully with

electronic and acoustic improvisors of diverse stripes sometimes at the same time In a series of encounters documented by his Unsounds label But in every situation the body-slamming energy and rhythmic ferocity of his original rock vocabulary is close at hand and so it is with these two otherwise highly dissimilar albums

American DJ /rupture's mixes for his *Mudd Up!* radio programme are rampantly eclectic and politically discomforting to the pro-Homeland Security set he and Moor may come from different stylistic camps but they shelter under similar ideological tents The duo have been playing together for about three years, but even though the 15 tracks of *Patches* were culled from live performances, the paucity of crowd noise until the very end and the clarity of recording ensure that it doesn't feel like a concert artefact The music has its share of pathos, mostly courtesy of appropriated female voices – Diana Ross, Tracy Chapman, some harder-to-identify African singers But much of the time it sounds like the duo had an indecent amount of fun playing together Although /rupture takes several plunges into murky sound pools which Moor rings with fences of notes that cut like razor wire the guitarist still gets many more opportunities to play inside outside, and around grooves than he usually does in a non-Ex gig On "Our Enemies Have Watches But We Have Time", he caroms big chords through /rupture's shards of dancehall and droning hurdy-gurdy like a young Godzilla punting skyscrapers

Le Journaliste with French sound poet Anne James Chaton, is even better If the term musique concrète wasn't already taken they could use it here to describe the title track's multi-tracked platoon of Chaton's intoned lists of items, perhaps the contents of the protagonist's pockets – what could be more concrete? Perhaps the coarse rocky surface that Moor churns from scoured strings on "Vous Etes Riches" Chaton does not limit himself to his own voice, weaving strands of TV chatter and crowd noise into Moor's ominous electronic pulse on "Dans Le Monde" and stretching a poly-linguistic Babel of transistorised readers between Moor's stark harmonic pylons and clanking transmissions on "Westher" Despite the proliferation of words the two men's constructions defy easy reading, but the urgency of their delivery mandates repeated efforts at decoding

Bill Meyer

Ornette Coleman
Croydon Concert
Free Factory CD

It's a paradox that Ornette Coleman has attempted to keep such a tight control over his recorded legacy that he's often priced himself out of the market, so a healthy industry of bootlegs and pirates has filled the vacuum Classics like *Ornette At 12* and *Crisis* have remained stubbornly unavailable and who can blame Coleman aficionados for needing to hear them?

But of all the 'missing' Ornettes, none is more historically revealing than the concert recorded at Croydon's Fairfield Halls on 29 August 1965 This piece of memorabilia is central to Ornette's story for two reasons for the first time we hear a fully written out Coleman composition, "Sounds And Forms", and the record demonstrates that Ornette's 1965 trio, with David Izenzon (bass) and Charles Moffett (drums) was capable of a far wider emotional scope than the official Blue Note records of the group *At The Golden Circle*, would allow for

Too wide it would seem, for some members of that South London audience In the midst of his maelstrom solo on "Silence" a heckler shouts out "Play "Cherokee"!", and Ornette teasingly drops in the opening phrase before brutally nipping it to shreds Ornette's playing that night had a lucidity and vividness that, even by his standards, is compelling and Izenzon and Moffett sound absolutely under his spell

In Ornette mythology Croydon is also significant for Coleman's refusal to bow to the British Musicians' Union Reciprocal arrangements ought to have been made to send a British musician to the US but instead of bothering with the bureaucracy, Ornette composed a wind quintet that reclassified him as a classical musician But "Sounds And Forms" is about more than short-circuiting red tape each of the five players are equal partners in the evolving mass of counterpoint and transcend their instrumental allegiance It's the harmolodic spirit in microcosm

Philip Clark

Pascal Comelade
The No Dancing
Because CD

As we should know by now, Catalans are different and French-Catalan composer Pascal Comelade is a local hero in the Barcelona region for his oddball instrumentation (ukulele toy piano, drinking straws) and his naive playpan rock'n'roll approach *The No Dancing* is a retrospective glance over the 1991–2007 era of his lengthy and prolific career in film soundtracks and albums but it's weirdly uneven A track liked "Elvis Loved Dogs" displays all Comelade's prime qualities bottleneck toy guitar thrashes out a spiky intro which has no apparent connection with the main tune, an anthem for dodgily tuned piano, sax and accordion We could almost be in Eno's *Here Come The Warm Jets* Comelade is more trashy than the UK's Penguin Cafe Orchestra, but shares their anti-pompous approach His ukuleles are strummed fiercely rather than daintily Carnival silliness is another item on Comelade's earthy agenda as on "L'U" or the Mexican ska of "Psicotic Music Hall" Also very fine are the alfin stomp of "Contre Le Style" and the bar band accordion doo-wop of "Betty Page A-Go-Go"

Comelade's distinctive sound is reliable, but his writing can be thin and repetitive His guest vocalists range from the sublime (Robert Wyatt's doo-wop take on Kurt Weill's "September Song", PJ Harvey's "Love Too Soon") to the annoyingly histrionic (Jean-Hervé Peron and Jac Berrocal) "Jours Tranquilles A Rodez" has Can's Jaki Liebezeit drumming alongside those twanging toy guitars Like Tom Waits Comelade has always been determined to do things his own way He aims at a new type of sophistication by stripping his music back to basics, and rescuing all those instruments long ago chucked into the back of the toy cupboard

Clive Bell

Dancehall: The Rise Of Jamaican Dancehall Culture
Various
Soul Jazz 2×CD

The dancehall has been the locus of Jamaican popular music since musicians broke out of the hotel jazz bars in the early days of ska But the ers of dancehall proper began in the late 70s, as the militancy of roots started to wane Expensive horn sections disappeared from studio bands and the drums and bass, and the space between them, became the focus more than ever, with the role of the studio producer primarily to fine-tune this rhythm machina Dancehall, then, was the first Jamaican music purpose-built for the dancehall This compilation covers the era's first decade or so, up to and including the early days of digital rhythms after King Jammy's "Under Mi Sleng Teng"

For such a purely populist genre dancehall is exhilaratingly stark add a deejay on top, and you've got atonal pop music that operates almost purely on the level of bodily mechanics and off-the-dome vocal riffs *Dancehall* captures the ruff immediacy on Yellow Man's "Bam Bam", Reggie Stepper's "Go Onnh" and Cutty Ranks's "Chop Chop" There's also pretty decent coverage of parsdigmatic anthems such as Fek-A-Mouse's "Wa Do Dem" and Barrington Levy's "Here I Come", and naturally for Soul Jazz plenty of unearthed rarities The story isn't quite complete the lack of dancehall singers (there's no Johnny Osbourne or John Holt) means this collection lacks the crucial social discourse which imbued songs in the economically deflated Jamaica of the time But combine this with a gritty collection such as Greensleeves' *The Biggest Dancehall Anthems 1979–1982*, and you've got a picture of an extraordinary musical era

Derek Walmsley

Myra Davies
Cities And Girls
Moabit Musik CD/Download

Despite the solo billing, *Cities And Girls* continues Banff based Myra Davies's long-running collaboration with Gudrun Gut the pair having previously created records and interdisciplinary performances as Miasma. Here, Gut acts as producer, providing – along with one-off contributions from fellow Berlin luminaries Alexander Hacke, Danielle de Picciotto and Beate Bartel – a backdrop of understated beats and evocative samples for Davies's spoken word pieces

Cities And Girls is indeed both travelogue and feminist argument, yet flashed out with more subtlety humour and sense of history than its deadpan title suggests "Hanoi" is full of the lazy sensuousness of

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a city "where the morning air is sweet with the smell of French bread", summoned up by Bartel's soundscape of beeping traffic quivering plucked instruments and birdsong. But it carries self-awareness of the tourist's necessarily superficial understanding concluding "Frankly I don't know what Hanoi is about". "My Friend Sherry" meanwhile, sets its grim story of illegal abortion in the 1960s over both the speech of an anti-abortion campaigner and a ghostly chorus whose girl group wistfulness reinforces the personal and emotional impact of 'Sherry' becoming just another statistic.

Davies's measured, deliberate vocals have a wry edge, helping her confront global issues on a human scale. "Stuff" brings a fresh perspective to the familiar topic of runaway consumerism, its description of greedy humans as "baby birds, mouths open, necks stretched" complemented by de Picciotto's singsong refrain of "My Favourite Things" and Hecke's collage of faintly predatory-sounding everyday objects. Gut is clearly having fun, too, constructing New York bustle from palpitating bass pulses and twitchy hi-hats for "Burroughs' Bunker", where Davies is blissfully oblivious to a poet's name-dropping of his friend Bill. "Drill" sees Gut provide suitably severe throbbing accompaniment to Davies's assertion that "Every girl needs a drill of her own", the pair subverting the traditionally masculine territories of electronics and DIY with obvious glee.

Abi Bliss

Deerhoof
Offend Maggie
ATP CD/LP/Download

As a title, *Offend Maggie* has a certain synchronicity with the times – at least to British ears, for whom 'Maggie' means Thatcher. If only Keith Joseph was alive to witness global capitalism suffer a massive coronary and be equally offended alongside her. I doubt that's the Maggie Deerhoof are thinking of somehow. But maybe one false start deserves another, and "Tears Of Music And Love" the record's opening gambit, will sound like a false start for many *Wire* readers. A wired art rock redraft of Free's "All Right Now"?

Deerhoof can pull off such a move just as they can pull off dizzy lurches along the melody-noise spectrum, abrupt rhythmic detours or condensing Jim O'Rourke's *Eureka* and *Insignificance* into the space of two songs. "Offend Maggie" and "Family Of Others". They can do it because ever since their sixth album, 2001's *Reveille*, they've had a voice. Finding a voice is a tired trope usually kicked about in the context of writers, but it means that when Deerhoof switch musical languages, those languages do not take over and speak through them, which is what happens to career eclecticians like The Beastie Boys, Beck or most post-rock outfits.

Offend Maggie continues to refine that voice. New second guitarist Ed Rodriguez slots in unobtrusively, Greg Saunier's butterfly/bass drumming underpins masterfully. And John Dieterich's guitar with Satomi Matsuzaki's vocals continue to hit on a sweet sourness, a magical-realist matt neon glow. The group can do with any given note what the blues scale does with its harmonic seventh, hover between minor and major, happy and sad. Equally important is the pleasure principle that animates Deerhoof. In so many outfits, avant moves like dissonance or disjuncture work negatively, as ways of refuting the logic of commercial pop. Deerhoof's swerves aren't attempts to negate pop cantrism; they're positive declarations of aesthetic faith. *Offend Maggie* is the sound of a group mind at work, deep in spontaneous collective play – but a kind of play taken very very seriously. As it should be.

Sam Davies

Drumbo
City Of Refuge
Proper CD

It doesn't look like Don van Vliet, aka Captain Beefheart, is going to to break cover any time soon, either to stage a re-entry into the music business or to cooperate with the legion of journalists eager to rake over the coals of his career as one of rock music's few genuine innovators. A shame, as we are effectively robbed of his reaction to the recent activities of his Magic Bandmates. Having assembled a touring version of The Magic Band a couple of years ago, here John 'Drumbo' French presents an album of original material assisted by fellow alumni Bill Harkleroad (aka Zoot Horn Rollo), Mark Boston (Rockette Morton), Greg Davidson (Ella Guru) and *Bat Chain Puller* guitarist John Thomas (who, as the liner notes confirm, has "no aka").

It should be understood that by 'original material', I mean that these compositions are previously unheard. An important qualification as, for the most part, these tunes sound exactly like a distillation of The Magic Band's various permutations from 1967 to 1982, and French's vocals are faithful to the original grain 'n' grit of van Vliet's husky exhortations – although it has to be said, his tones also recall those of ex-St Vitus/The Obsessed/The Hidden Hand frontman Scott 'Wino' Weinrich, especially on the doomy yet anthemic stomp of "Abandon". All reservations concerning stylistic necrophilia are blown away by the brilliance and beauty of the execution and the fact that no group on Earth plays quite like this one. Magic in theory and practice.

Joseph Stannard

The Epicureans
Introducing The Epicureans
Semata Productions CD

One of the basic tenets of Epicurean philosophy was its belief that man should flee pain and pursue pleasure, but pleasant is hardly the adjective that springs to mind on listening to these six abrasive improvisations by saxophonist David Gross, bassist Ryan McGuire and percussionist Ricardo Donoso. All Bostonians, "Sweetly Violent Revisionists" starts out in standard early 2000s lower case mode: all tiny puffs, drips and gurgles, but "Scum Of The Earth" is a different beast altogether, with menacing growls from Gross, teethgrinding squeaks from Donoso and low end scrapes from McGuire that sound like a heavy object being dragged across the floor.

Indeed, one of the most impressive things about the group is how difficult it is to tell the bassist and drummer apart on "Benefits, Disclosures And Accommodation Of Nothing" they slug it out for control of the upper registers while Gross howls distressingly through his horn like a cross between a Black Metal vocalist and a wounded wolf. Though there is a sense of forward motion, albeit lethargic, in the opening and closing tracks – the latter entitled, with dangerous honesty, "Thoughts I Lost But It Didn't Matter Because I'm Sure It Was Bullshit" – the four central pieces are remarkable for their obstinate refusal to go anywhere except deeper into the dark, dirty core of sound itself. The line in the sand that separates improv and noise has always been difficult to find, and albums like this seem to blow it away altogether. The Epicureans will appeal – if that's the right word – to fans of Erstwhile and No Fun alike.

Dan Warburton

Pater Evans/Weasel Walter Group
Oculus Ex Abyssus
ugEXPLODE LP

Peter Evans/James Fei/Damon Smith/ Weasel Walter
Untitled
ugEXPLODE CD-R

Oakland (formerly Chicago) based drummer Weasel Walter has been giving the finger to jazz and improv purists alike for well over a decade now, but despite Micaele Peterson's scary de Kooning-meets-*Evil Dead 2* artwork, the four tracks on the untitled CD-R with trumpeter Peter Evans, alto saxophonist James Fei and bassist Damon Smith often direct their fury inwards, rolling in the filth of their own dirty drones. Proceedings tend to be dominated by Walter's typically frenzied power drumming and the extraordinary virtuosity of Evans, moving from spit-smeared low-end snarl to brevura high register firestorm at breathtaking speed, but Smith and Fei provide the pungent manure they bury their roots in. Avoiding Brötzmanic bluster, Fei digs in to his gritty multiphonics with grisly relish, while Smith saws deep and hard.

On *Oculus Ex Abyssus* – Weasel has as slender grasp of Latin grammar as the Death Metal groups he loves so much – Fei's shrill extremities are replaced by more 'traditional' from-the-gut blowing from James Hertsaw, and Smith and Walter revert to the time honoured role of rhythm section, albeit a particularly chaotic and explosive one, behind Evans and Hertsaw's two-pronged horn attack. The resulting brawl sounds a little more like a classic free jazz brainfry, though it certainly doesn't look like one, with its skulls, syringes and snotgreen vinyl.

Dan Warburton

Paul Flaherty
Aria Nativa
Family Vineyard LP

Saxophonist Paul Flaherty spent over 20 years recording exclusively with collaborators, but lately going it alone has become his new hobby. *Aria Nativa* is Flaherty's third solo release in five years and likely his best. On four tracks taken from two concerts, he maintains a high-pitched, urgent tone, never wavering from his full-speed path. Where his last solo album, 2006's stellar *Whirl Of Nothingness*, bore a melancholy tonal, these pieces are strident and pointed, as if Flaherty has a lot to say and not nearly enough time to say it.

At a January 2007 show in Brooklyn, Flaherty flies to the highest register on the relentless 15 minute "Woman In The Polka-Dot Dress", then explores many sequences of note clusters on the brisk "I Don't Live Here Anymore". The second side, from an April 2007 show in New Hampshire, mirrors side one structurally. It ends with the short "Moving Through The Darkness", but the album's peak comes before, on the epic "Weren't There Two Of Them?" Flaherty begins here in Ayler-style ballad mode, then sprints through chirpy squawks, fluid melody and harrowing screams that sound more human than horn based.

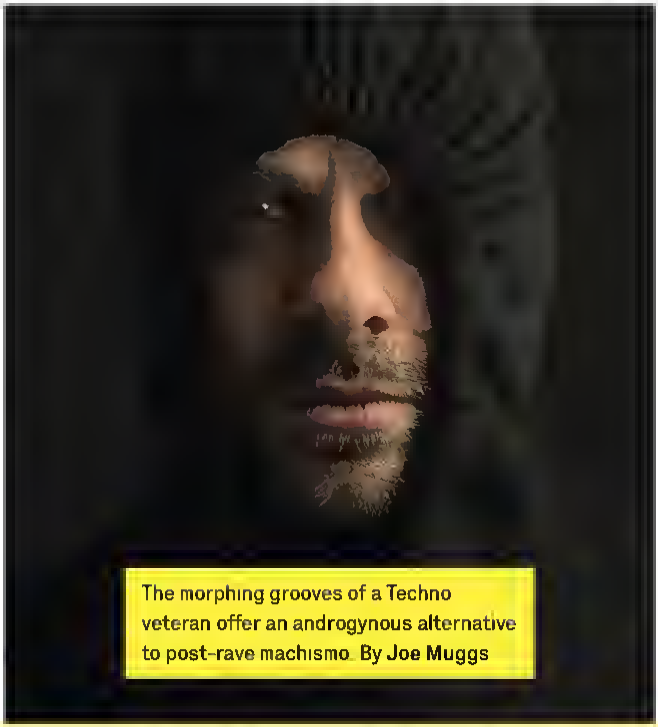
Maybe those howls are in fact meant as speech. The inclusion of Ken DelPonte's politically blunt poem "No More America" on the album's back cover (a spoken version awaits LP owners as a digital download) suggests Flaherty's fiery emotion might be charged by current American events. But the power of *Aria Nativa* comes not so much in what Flaherty is trying to say as in the undeniable vitality with which he has chosen to say it.

Marc Masters

Ryojiro Furusawa & Ken Mikami
Buriki/Tin
PSF CD

It's a strange train of thought to wonder why we don't have a Kan Mikami-type figure in the UK. Usually described as a surrealist folk singer, he trashes the cosy stereotypes of singer-songwriter or poet, perhaps most of all that of 'folk singer'. A kamikaze Allen Ginsberg, sheven-headed and beefed up, he paces restlessly back and forth from the microphone, a shadow boxer jabbing out lines of sung poetry (in translation) *"Avaiding the thronging crowd. I grobbed the roging boy's wrist."* An electric guitar supports and fills in around the lines, and Mikami's minor chords echo the song conventions of chanson or Japanese enka ballad. But there's no settled groove, no display of technique, and his approach is closer to the passionate quest of the free jazz musician.

Which is why *Buriki/Tin*, a collaboration with jazz drummer Ryojiro Furusawa, makes so much sense. Furusawa has also been around the block a few times, and first played with Mikami in 1974. This is their third album as a duo. Furusawa avoids violence or hectic playing, and has a rather beautiful sound to his kit, fairly closely miked. Mikami is never less than fierce and compelling, but this is a nicely poised, understated record. Even on a song which encourages the swordsmen, *"Quick, decapitate me, quick, finish the job!"* no one feels the need to go berserk. Seven songs are segued into a continuous sequence – between songs Mikami may erupt into spectacular groans and wails, but the



The morphing grooves of a Techno veteran offer an androgynous alternative to post-rave machismo. By Joe Muggs

Neil Landstrumm
Lord For £39
Planet Mu CD/2×LP

During recent months a burst of colour has erupted from the occasionally somewhat dark and foreboding territories of Grime and dubstep. A set of mainly young producers – Rustie, Joker, Ikonika, Zomby, Starkey – have rewritten the two sub-genres' formulae and loosened their rules, filling tracks with rippling melody and constant off-beam rhythmic variations. However, the most authoritative and compelling statement yet of these new possibilities comes not from a neon-clad young raver, but from a veteran of UK Techno.

It's no shock that Neil Landstrumm (aka Neil Sutherland) should have an affinity with Grime and dubstep, as his Techno long predated their 140bpm tempos and body-shaking infrasonics. From the early 1990s stage of his career at Edinburgh's Sative and Pure clubs, Landstrumm's music was renowned for the depth and presence of his omnipresent sub-bass. From his 1995 Peacefrog album *Brown By August* on, he connected the bleep 'n' bass sensibility of early Warp with jacking Chicago House and Underground Resistance's militant red-alert sonics. By 2002's *She Took A Bullet Meant For Me* on Tresor his injections of dense urban soundscapes and hiphop elements – inspired by five years living in Brooklyn – were pre-empting dubstep. Most recently he shed the four-to-the-floor kick completely in favour of dubstep and Grime's syncopations, resulting in last year's *Restaurant Of Assassins*, a playful collision of the new styles with the bleeps and breakbeats of rave circa 1990–92 (topped with a contribution from that era's foremost lyricists The Ragga Twins). Rather than hybridising or pastiching, it created something greater than the sum of its parts, pointing toward an upbeat way out of the half-tempo rut into which dubstep was at that point tending to slip.

Even given that history, *Lord For £39* comes as a potent suprise. From the springy chimes and curiously warm synthetic voice that announce the start of "Transmission" onwards, every expectation of what bass-led soundsystem music should do is turned on its head as new elements are added – every track is filled with mischievously cheerful hooks and riffs and beats that expertly inhabit the spaces in between existing genres and sub-genres. "Transmission" drives forwards with an early Grime stutter and the bassline bounce of DJ Zinc's key breakbeat Garage track "138 Trek", but is then punctuated with lyserg'c contrapuntal zaps and a darting string riff. Though the strings echo Grime they could equally come from a disco track, with all the jouissance that implies. The glitterball exuberance should sound out of place in an aggressive bass-centred framework, but here sounds like the most natural thing in the world.

And here lies the genius of the record. Landstrumm's musical territory is all too often dominated by the "Ardkore continuum" turned doctrinal by a canon of Jungle, UK Garage, Grime, dubstep and hiphop, and a fetishising of aggressive urban masculinity, tower blocks, technology fear and adrenalin – what Kodwo Eshun has termed 'mechanismo'. Landstrumm reminds us that these genres also contain sensuality, seduction, a zing and a tickle and polymorphous perversity a world away from badman posturing, which derives not just from the ecstasy imperative of rave, but from the musical DNA of soul, disco, Latin music and electropop which have been transmitted through House, electro and hiphop to newer genres. Even in the late 90s hard Techno heyday of shaved heads and bare torsos, Landstrumm explicitly stated he made music "to keep girls in the dance", emphasising his House influences. His new work inhabits a tradition where Grooverider, even as he was coining the term 'hardstep' said his music was "all still House", where Shut Up And Dance became instrumental in the birth of Hardcore only inadvertently when they sped up hiphop beats to speeds they could do jazz-dance moves to.

These tracks, playing complex games with genre rules of tempo and arrangement, don't just artificially force together unlikely combinations of styles, they find an alternate universe where they naturally overlap. "Dirty Butcher" shows that the mecho swagger of Dirty South Crunk and the sexually ambiguous, hallucinatory seductions of Soft Cell or Chris & Cosey share more than just raw 808 drum machines: there is basic groove and melodic data common to both. "A Little Help From Rustie", made with longtime collaborator Tobias Schmidt and featuring samples from the producer of the title, has a leg-humping organ bassline that recalls 2 Bad Mice's dark rave anthem "Bombscare" and Timbaland and Missy Elliot's "Cop That Shit", layered with cute P-funk squiggles that would be equally at home on a Scandinavian skweee track or an 80s Cameo side.

These jokey track titles – see also "Shit Daddy Bass", "£20 To Get Home", "Ross Kemp As Pixel" – imply a wit and levity to this undermining of soundsystem music's self-conscious darkness. But there is none of the sardonic pastiche that you find in, say, Venetian Snares or various Rephlex artists. These beats and frequencies are made for their instant effect. Landstrumm is a raver before he is a historian, and there is a granite kick and psychedelic complexity beneath the jokes. Quicksilver transitions between genre signifiers confound the brain, forcing a suspension of expectation and demanding abandonment to the bounce, twirl and slither of the mobile sounds. Far from undermining the various genres it touches, or creating imitations of styles that have come before, *Lord For £39* opens them up, reveals new possibilities in even the most well-worn sounds. In so doing it achieves the miraculous by being one of the year's most innovative dance music records, *and* one of the most fun. □

duo marshal their timing with a skill born of long experience. If free jazz beat poetry is dead, no one told Kan Mikami.
Clive Bell

Cem Güney
Praxis
Cronica Electronica CD
This debut album by a producer and multi-instrumentalist from Izmir comes replete with an impressively elaborate self-description. It talks of "Phonetics themes" using phonemes rather than words to tell stories, with digressions into "Nada Yoga" and the claim that the producer is "beholden to the harmoniousness of two essential properties that maintains the forcefulness of a cognition space." Even after several readings, soundtracked by the aural results, it remains opaque what the actual links are between the theory and *Praxis*.

What we have here is a record that is consistently sophisticated, sometimes almost beautiful, but remarkably standard. The palette here – a collage of field recordings, laptop distortion, minimal instrumentation and subterranean hums – is remarkably familiar from any number of !Book creations released in the last decade or so. *Praxis* is a particularly serene version of this idiom. The ideas seem to be confined to the jerky cut-ups of the opening "A Phonetics Theme", whose spliced syllables evoke something between Stockhausen's *Stimmung* and Goodiepal. After this, tracks are left to drift along prettily in a by now predictable international laptop style.

The rather misnamed "Visceral (In A Figurative Sense)" for instance, elegantly features doleful organ chords, a punctuating synth, and some background clutter and scrape, as if to give the impression that the piece is far less structured than it is. "Behold Now Bikkus. The Sounds Of Nada Yoga" promises something slightly more outré, with its chants hovering in the background – but there are no major departures.
Owen Hatherley

Carlos Giffoni
Adult Life
No Fun Product one CD/Download
A recurrent gripe with power electronics and the noise scene is that the work of some of the more testosterone-laced practioners can collapse into blank, blind overload. The live spectacle of a performer like Prurient, writhing and screaming into the microphone as the walls of distortion close in, exemplifies the problem – is there any deeper resonance than a fetishistic spectacle of man versus machine, and who has the upper hand anyway?

Carlos Giffoni's recent work has sought a way out of the problem by almost removing human presence altogether. Listen to recent synth drone works such as *Arrogance* or the collection *Eternal Noise* and there's no sense of someone working faders or knobs, just the impression of countless banks of machinery being flicked into operation and the distinctive hum of each slowly merging and separating. *Adult Life* continues this strategic retreat from grappling with the machines. Paradoxically it's his most intimate and enveloping electronic environment yet.

"The Endless Mirror" has two square-toothed, warmly filtered synth lines subtly drifting into and out of chorus, as a ticking, resonating loop ticks along underneath. The sense of deep stasis is underlined by the track titles: "A Permanent Choice", "Comfort And Pleasure", "A Son Without A Father". At the end of the five long tracks here, the earthy electronic hum and slowly looping arpeggios suggest Cluster at their most languid playing through a backline of Vox valve amps. It's power electronics stripped right back to the copper wires.
Derek Walmsley

Ryu Hankil/Choi Joonyong/Hong Chulki
5 Modules V
Manual CD-R
Manual's *5 Modules* series showcases South Korea's increasingly fertile electroacoustic improv scene. The fifth and final instalment features Hong Chulki, Choi Joonyong and Ryu Hankil exploring the innards of, respectively, turntables, CD players and clockwork in three relatively brief but effective structured improvisations (whose scores are available for consultation on the Manual website).

Joonyong's "Musicboxxx" explores the idea of pulse, with Hankil ticking along regularly throughout, Chulki speeding up and slowing down, and Joonyong doing the opposite. A disarmingly simple idea, but thanks to the instrumentation involved, the resulting music is rich and complex: a kind of cross between mid-period Ligeti and Otomo Yoshihide. Hankil's "Pieces" instructs the musicians to choose three particular "vibration sounds", play them each for a minute in a particular order, then vary the order and repeat the process twice more with a minute-long pause in between. Once more, what appears to be a dry set of basic instructions generates a rough and exciting listening experience: all whirring, clanking metal, gritty sludge and fizzing static.

Moving away from pulse back into more traditional territory of slowly shifting timbre, Chulki's "Feedback Ring For Three Electric Players" is precisely what it says it is: a patient exploration of the grey area where sound tips over into noise. It's a work of raw beauty that ends too suddenly and too soon.
Dan Warburton

Kieran Hebden & Steve Reid
NYC
Domino CD/LP
When the Hebden/Reid duo first emerged with the release of *The Exchange Session Volumes 1&2* in 2006, it came as a thrilling blast of unexpected energy. Fusing Hebden's electronic skills honed as Four Tet with Reid's decades of experience behind the drum kit in contexts ranging from Motown house groups to Sun Ra's Arkestra, they revealed a remarkable empathy, building dense, exhilarating improvisations that pointed towards a genuinely new conception of 21st century free music. However, 2007's follow-up *Tongues* prompted the suspicion – borne out by live shows – that those original sessions might have represented a creative plateau. The newer jams were built around tighter, prearranged rhythmic sketches but, in losing some of the spontaneity, the empathy seemed to have dissipated, the two protagonists busily pursuing their own ecstatic ends without any deeper interaction.

This latest follows largely the same format as *Tongues*. Hebden lays down a sampled riff. Reid hacks out an undeviating 4/4 rhythmic path and Hebden embellishes with further electrickery. It's clear that Hebden is the main instigator of these one-idea jams. "Between B & C", with its Pentangle-ish guitar sample, could be a Four Tet tune if not for Reid's very loose, very human drums. And that's where the problem lies. Heboen is clearly striving for dancefloor impact, incorporating tricks from Techno and hiphop – the drop-in/drop-out, build-and-release manipulation of tension and energy – but Reid's drumming is so untethered and frankly messy that it sucks the explosions out of whatever bombs Hebden's trying to drop. Reid is, at best, reacting rather than interacting. A whole world of power is lost in those crucial milliseconds.

There are moments when it works, as on "1st & 1st". Its cosmic howls and whooshes and head-down drive approximating Miles Davis's *Agharta*-era space funk. But it's telling that the most immersive track, the closing "Departure", is the least tied to rhythm, with Reid's simmering hi-hats and tumbling fills bouncing around a crystalline shower of notes. There's always hope that it signals the duo's return to that free zone of chaotic and compelling invention in which they first formed.
Daniel Spicer

Jerboe
Mahakali
The End Recordings CD
If Jarboe's recent collaborations with Neurosis, Colorado War Metal duo Cobalt and UK bliss-Metallers Jesu suggested that the vocalist was seeking to align herself with the constantly mutating world of avant Metal – not unreasonable given her part in Swans, perhaps the single biggest influence on this burgeoning area of music aside from the obvious likes of Black Sabbath et al – *Mahakali* (which features guest spots from Mayhem frontman Attila Csihar and Pantera/Down howler Phil Anselmo) serves as an unhibrited exploration of the possibilities she herself helped to crack open alongside her erstwhile partner in filth and redemption Michael Gira. It's intriguing that, while Gira bares his soul without recourse to Sturm und Drang in Angels Of Light, Jarboe often considered the softer, more feminine (whatever that means) element of the NYC dirge machine is leaning more and more towards extreme sonic violence.

Mahakali is hardly a cynical grab for the currently robust Metal dollar, however

These songs are expansive rather than claustrophobic: the aggression emanating chiefly from Vincent Signorelli's pummelling drums rather than Colin Marston, Kevin Hufnagel and Josh Graham's hyper-distorted riffs – the blackened, beatless drone of "A Sea Of Blood And Hollow Screaming" being a notable exception. The album hits its stride with "The House Of Void" and "Transmogrification", which witness Jarboe shapeshifting from vengeful revenant to innocent martyr over shuddering fields of rhythmic noise.

As for her vocal collaborators, Csihar acquits himself brilliantly, festooning "The Soul Continues" with guttural sobs and spectral groans while Anselmo flounders on "Overthrown". Neither are a match for the overpowering presence of The Living Jarboe.

Joseph Stannard

Juaneco Y Su Combo
Masters Of Chicha 1
Barbes CD/Download

Hailing from a town in Peru near the headwaters of the Amazon, Juan Wong Paredes was a brickmaker turned leader of Juaneco Y Su Combo, a group specialising in the rebellious chicha sound popular in the area during the late 60s. The door to this marginalised and later forgotten genre – a hybrid of mutated Columbian cumbia rhythms and mid-60s US garage rock tropes – was prized open recently by Barbes label proprietor Olivier Conan with the compilation *The Roots Of Chicha*.

Juaneco Y Su Combo represented all that was alluring about the music of that anthology. Insistent dance rhythms that play as folk music but suggest something almost sinister with sustained exposure. A Farfisa organ, lending a shading of reedy menace familiar from one-off garage hits of the day, and guitar chords turned liquid via the wah-wah pedal. References to the Amazonian psychoactive compound ayehuasca crop up in the group's meterial ("Vacilendo Con Ayehuasca", "El Brujo"), much of it written by guitarist Noe Fachin, a schoolteacher whose fondness for nature's hallucinogens earned him the nickname of 'The Witchdoctor'.

Fachin and four others of the group died in a plane crash as the group was hitting its stride. Juaneco's saga, in this light, might be read as another fragment of rock mythology and perhaps nothing more. Fortunately their tough and rootsy sound transcends both gossip and time. Conan is to be congratulated for writing a new chapter in the annals of international proto-punk sensibility.

Richard Hendersen

Allen Kaprow
How To Make A Happening
Primary Information CD

Originally released as an LP in 1966 on Mass Art – a small independent art label also responsible for releasing Terry Riley's debut album *Reed Streams* – this release of former action painter Allan Kaprow's lost instruction guide to making a successful Happening rescues an important art document from obscurity.

The origins of Kaprow's Happenings movement can be found in the late 50s, when he decided a gallery space was too small for the more sprawling, socially involved art projects he had in mind. Instead he suggested that art should spill out into the real world, involving people, actions, nature and coincidence as its basic materials. *How To Make A Happening* has Kaprow laying out 11 ground rules of how to create such an event. "Forget all standard art forms," he drawls on rule number one. "Don't paint pictures, don't make poetry, don't build architecture, don't arrange dances, don't write plays, don't compose music, don't make movies, and above all don't think you'll get a Happening by putting these all together." Throughout this list of preparatory instructions, Kaprow sounds well aware that making a recorded guide to making a Happening is a Happening in itself.

This is even more evident on the second track where he describes in detail the programme and notes to his *Soap Calling* and *Raining* Happenings, all of which involve a combination of improvisation and environmental forces. In the same questing spirit of the dada poets or Burroughs's experiments with tape recorders, Kaprow's intentionally unsentimental delivery – concerning a movement that would send reverberations throughout post-war art – gives his *How To Make A Happening* the status of a revolutionary action.

Edwin Pouncey

Hilde Marie Kjersem
A Killer For That Ache
Rune Grammofon CD

27 year old Norwegian singer-songwriter Hilde Marie Kjersem cites influences which range from the musical (Robert Wyatt, Kate Bush) to those who, in their different ways, deal in a heightened and intensified form of cinema (David Lynch, Tim Burton). This is apparent on her debut album, which is at once as intimate as a whisper in the ear and formally enigmatic. This is not a confessional, impassioned or melancholic work, despite the emotional connections it makes. It's full of shifting scenarios, "Fantasy" is an apposite case in point, as some of these songs contain fantasies within the inherent fantasy of the pop lyric, marked by abrupt shifts in musical mood.

Instrumentally, Kjersem draws from a rich acoustic/electric palette. She herself plays keyboards and autoharp, while between them Jergen Munkeby, Torbjern Folke Zetterberg, Sjur Miljeteig and Peder Kjellsby play, among other things, saxophones, flute, guitar, banjo, Moog, Rhodes, trumpet and piano. And yet, she draws surprisingly sparingly on these resources, perhaps too little at times, often using multitracked harmonies for effect. A splendid exception is "London Bridge", perhaps the album's standout track, with its mock-nursery rhyme lyrical departure, its clenking, pegleg rhythm and grim, Thames-like toxic swathes. It's a little puzzling that some of the other songs here aren't similarly rich in arrangement, but then, as the final track, a banjo-led piece which concludes early and abruptly attests, this is an intriguing, puzzling album which does enough to seduce you into repeated playings to fathom its discreet intentions.

David Stubbs

Kito-Mizukumi Rouber
Boseki Nr Tetazumu KMR
PaPa CD

Hesegawa-Shizuo
I Know A Chord Buried Into The Ground And A Tongue On A Cloud
Nanng N ap CD

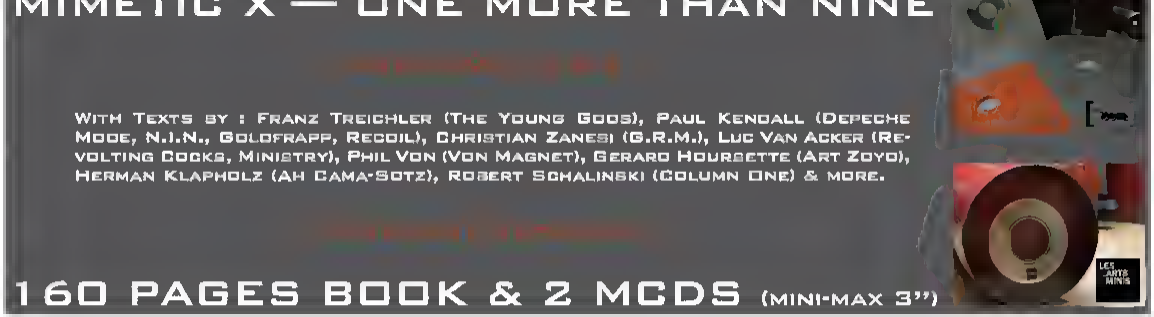
On the sleeve to their debut album, Japanese trio Kito-Mizukumi Rouber name themselves Papekyowance Pyorotomy, Tecondo Dokuninushino Makoto and Papa Big Papa. I can't tell you which of those pseudonyms works as cover for Hiroto Hasegawa and Shizuo Uchida, aka Hasegawa-Shizuo, but the humour fits their aesthetic: they're the next step in a post-Beefheart avant rock continuum that includes Half Japanese, the Ron Johnson label, Limanarina and Harry Pussy. KMR's riffs are denuded and cutting, and on songs like "Yellow Class" the instruments work at cross purposes but it locks together through the sheer doggedness of the performance, suggesting an internal logic impenetrable to all but the most committed. There are hints of Japanese Group Sounds in "Funsoku Keiten Gomu Udon", but played with primitivist gusto into a muddy four-track. It's rude – as in roughly wrought – but KMR's wilful hermeticism allows their peculiar personality to blossom.

As far as 180 degree turns go, you could do worse than *I Know A Chord* – its seeming quiescence is the flipside to KMR's rambunctious energy. But with this, their third album, Hasegawa-Shizuo move past simplistic improv actions. "Possible To Grip A Signal Fire" continually circles back on itself, with gasps of harmonium curving like a helix underneath wind instruments. There's a nice tension between static and hyperactive here – while some tracks are swallowed by grouchy drones, the energetic scrapings of "A Longing For Iron Ball" toy with loss of control.

Jon Dale

KTL
IV
Editions Mego CD

The results of this partnership between Stephen O'Malley and Editions Mego label founder Peter Rehberg were assembled in Tokyo in September 2008 – with Jim O'Rourke as producer – from recordings made earlier in the year. While it shares some of the characteristics of other O'Malley projects, notably the Dark Ambience of Aethenor, KTL sounds both more fractured and more relentlessly driven. Its sound is a kind of sub-Metal, where O'Malley's abstract guitar riffs and feedback tones collide and merge with Rehberg's synth pulses and clusters of electronic tics, buzzes and glitches. Where, notionally, there is more room for the music to expand, as on the lengthy "Paratrooper", O'Malley



and Rehberg instead channel it more narrowly into a kind of drilled repetition, like the endless thud and grind of industrial machinery, but filtered through a geuze of sibilant electronica. "Benbbet", another lengthy track, is more exploratory, even tentative. In its initial construction of noise and spaced sound clusters, until it settles into a pattern of ping-ponging electronics and distorted swathes of guitar.

This all sounds controlled and harnessed, as though O'Malley and Rehberg have shaped their material into a kind of narrative: the album's longer passages are interspersed with shorter 'sketches' of guitar/electronic interplay. However, the sound is intentionally never particularly fluid, instead relying on a sense of momentum generated by its non-harmonious parts rubbing up abrasively against one another. Here the achievement has been to take fragmentary noise and abstracted Metal guitar elements and direct them in such a way that they make for an extended, coherent, and often viscerally engaging statement.

Tom Ridge

Lapslap
Itch
Leo CD

Lapslap comprises Michael Edwards (tenor sax, computer, MIDI wind controller), Martin Parker (French horn, computer) and Karin Schistek (piano), and *Itch* was recorded in Reid Hall in Edinburgh, where the acoustic is such that the musicians felt it worth trying to include it as an element in some of their improvisations. Certainly this is very atmospheric music. The ten short and varied performances explore a wide range of sonorities and textures which is further extended by use of electronic modifications. The insert notes refer to the trio's desire "to make well-formed music in realtime", and on the evidence of these single-take tracks they have succeeded admirably.

There are passages, as on "Nailed" for piano and computer, where Lapslap evoke some of the very best of the early musique concrète productions of the Pierre Schaeffer circle: while in parts of "Honk" for tenor sax, piano and electronics, the spirit of Stockhausen hovers, though some visceral Brötzmann-style outbursts (justifying the title) sweep everything else aside and go some way to preparing the ears for the flurry of industrial noise on the next track "Hungry", for piano and two computers. Elsewhere, in "Motor Mouth" for example, there is some good old mainstream Fire Music, with shades of Archie Shepp and Cecil Taylor. This sequence of contrasts gives some indication of the group's tactic of constantly unsettling your expectations.

Schistek is a synaesthete, a fact that informs the closing track, "Rhapsody In Light Yellow" for piano and two computers. Most of us sometimes resort to similes of light and colour in an attempt to convey the nature and affect of music, but for synaesthetes the hue of a note or chord or key is not a metaphorical device but an objective fact. Efforts to empathise with how Schistek literally sees this music bring this impressive session to a fascinating, thought-provoking close.

Barry Witherden

Joe Maneri & Peter Dolger
Peace Concert
Atavistic Unheard Music Series CD

The most striking feature of this archival duo recording by saxophonist Joe Maneri and drummer Peter Dolger, beyond the music itself, is its dateline. It was recorded live in New York at the end of 1963 or early in 1964 during a period when mainstream jazz histories would be happy to leave it at acknowledged masterpieces – *Out To Lunch*, *A Love Supreme* and *Spiritual Unity*, perhaps. But here's Maneri with an equally radical and fully formed view of where the saxophone might go.

In the early 60s, Maneri was burning around New York, playing weddings and opening his ears to what he describes as "authentic ethnic musics". This music was recorded at St Peter's Church at 2am for an audience of six people during a concert dedicated to peace, but they were witness to many of the principles that would steer Maneri through the next three decades.

His attractively tart tones, as distinctive as Coltrane or Ayler, and its objective purity helps clarify the sophistication of his departure from 12 notes to the octave, as Maneri dives ever deeper into his emerging patterns to finger increasingly rarefied inflections. He rejects big moments of structural arrival in favour of lines that spiral outwards, accumulating depth and complexity of gesture. The duo aren't equipped to challenge the regularity of bar lines like Dolphy or Coltrane – Dolger is a solid and inventive percussionist, but he's no Elvin Jones or Sunny Murray. Nevertheless, here's the opening chapter of an important alternative history.

Philip Clark

The James Marshall Human Arts Ensemble
Autonomous Oblast
Freedonia Music CD

The Human Arts Ensemble were a loose affiliation of free jazz players based in St Louis, Missouri and coordinated by alto saxophonist James Marshall. It emerged from the city's celebrated Black Artists Group, and at various times included in its ranks musicians of the calibre of saxophonists Oliver Lake and Julius Hemphill, woodwind player JD Parran, trombonist Joseph Bowie and drummer Charles "Bobo" Shaw. They took up the permission extended by innovators such as Sun Ra, Coltrane, Ayler and The Art Ensemble Of Chicago and ran with it. The material on *Autonomous Oblast* dates from the mid-70s, by which time fiery free blowing no longer seemed in itself iconoclastic. The language was well-established and, ironically but inevitably, it already had its 'classics'. As a performed music – for those involved – it addressed an expressive need; as a listening music – for the rest of us – it had to prove itself more than an exercise in style. That's still the case.

"Invocation", the first half hour of this release, is a torrential outpouring by a nine piece incarnation of the Ensemble, prolonged saxophone glossolalia and cymbal thrash over a groundswell of pounded piano chords. "Oasis" is a less extrovert interlude prominently featuring a double reed bamboo pipe and small percussion instruments imported from AEC territory. "Remembrances Of The Present" comes from a later quintet session: at once frenzied and oddly routine despite pianist Greg Mills's muscular Tyner-meets-Taylor input. There is some excitement and interest on *Autonomous Oblast*, not least in Maurice Malik King's distinctively malleable alto tone, but only intermittently does it pass the exercise-in-style test.

Julian Cowley

The Chris McGregor Trio
Our Prayer
Fledgling CD

On the brink of forming his large freewheeling ensemble The Brotherhood Of Breath, pianist Chris McGregor went into a London studio with American bassist Barre Phillips and fellow South African exile Louis Moholo on drums. They recorded *Our Prayer* 40 years on, and 18 years after McGregor's death, it finds the light of day for the first time – and it's a gem. Produced by Joe Boyd – who soon afterwards involved McGregor in a guest spot on Nick Drake's *Bryter Layter* – this release has intimacy, balance and clarity to a degree that was rare for UK jazz releases at that time.

McGregor's talent for surrounding himself with distinctive and dynamic musicians has perhaps obscured his own distinctiveness and dynamism as a pianist, but those qualities are abundantly evident across these four tracks. The musical influence of his upbringing in the Eastern Cape rings through favoured rhythms, harmonies and melodic structures, but the music here is characterised still more by daring and eruptive improvising that asserts strong allegiance with contemporary free jazz. The infectious opening bars of "Church Mouse" readily confirm the seductive charm of McGregor's themes, but he was always primed to break loose in fiery runs and percussive bursts, peppered with touches of sophisticated abstraction.

There's some marvellous interplay. Phillips, who had previously played with Eric Dolphy and Archie Shepp, is a brilliantly expressive musician. Moholo, McGregor's close associate for years in The Blue Notes, adds subtle coloration as well as elemental surge and drive. *Our Prayer* has stood the test of time and is good enough to be mentioned in the same breath as Howard Riley's groundbreaking piano trio recordings from that period.

Julian Cowley

Louis Moholo-Moholo & Marilyn Crispell
Sibanye (We Are One)
Intakt CD

If April is the cruellest month, early autumn can be exceptionally gorgeous. *Sibanye* presents two sexagenarians, an American pianist and a South African drummer, playing together for the first time. This duo could have happened any time after Crispell came onto the scene in the late 70s and the results would probably have been satisfying. Although strangers to each other, neither is a stranger to the pairing of 88s and traps. Moholo-Moholo has recorded with Irene Schweizer and Cecil Taylor; Crispell with Eddie Prevost.

But if this encounter had taken place 20 or 30 years ago, when energy topped Crispell's priority list, it likely would have been a much more steamrolling affair than this impressively varied and thoughtful performance. Moholo-Moholo's opening gambit is a blurred yet swinging shuffle wreathed by the ringing of lightly stroked cymbals. Crispell starts with gently dropped notes, but her response soon ascends a staircase of increasingly elaborate melodic variations. The music accumulates density, velocity, and alacrity, but without sacrificing that initial spaciousness. The title "Improvise, Don't Compromise" suggests that neither gave quarter, but maybe they didn't need to; each player asserts their unique personality without overshadowing or displacing the other.

On "Journey" each draws on personal history that confers emotional heft. The drummer first intones the names of fallen comrades. Then he and Crispell lock into a vertiginous dust-devil swirl and just as the music threatens to blur and darken, she shuffles the deck. Out comes a rolling, lyrical figure straight out of Coltrane, whose music converted her from classical to jazz and then brings things full circle with a jubilant township tune. Rigorous, moving, yet clear eyed, this is cooperative music making of a high order.

Bill Meyer

Murcof
The Versailles Sessions
Leaf CD/LP

Mexico born, Barcelona based Fernando Corona, aka Murcof, works nowadays on a principally monumental scale. His last work, 2007's *Cosmos*, was widely praised though less so by this writer, who found it a tad literal. *The Versailles Sessions* is not billed as a follow-up to *Cosmos* but as a stopgap until his next major studio work in 2009. However, it represents a significant improvement.

The album arises from a site-specific commission at the French chateau for Les Grandes Eaux Nocturnes, an annual festival of "sound, light and water". It derives from sessions in which musicians recorded pieces by the likes of Lully and Couperin on Baroque period instruments such as the harpsichord, viola da gamba and violin. However, they also improvised and experimented on the instruments, and it is this which provides the source material for Murcof's compositions.

The results are an absolute pleasure. On "Welcome To Versailles", you sense that it's not just the musicians having fun but the instruments themselves, given licence to speak in freeform, modernistic tongues unknown when they were first conceived, detached from their antiquity, exclaiming with rapture and awe as and when it pleases them to. The impressionistic "Louis XIV's

The polyphonic spree of **Valerio Cosi**'s saxophone experiments place him at the forefront of tape-looping psychedelia. By **Matthew Wuethrich**

Valerio Cosi
Collected Works
Porter CD
Valerio Cosi & Fabio Orsi
We Could For Hours
A Silent Place CD
Valerio Cosi
Heavy Electronic Pacific Rock
Digitalis CD

The music of Valerio Cosi encompasses a vast and diverse musical terrain. Tense, impenetrable approximations of percussion ensembles from around the globe: freely accented jazz drumming, intricate tabla rhythms, extemporaneous saxophone solos, overdubbed horn chorales, flutes, mess vocal chants, Kosmische synth stabs, waves of sculpted noise – these all appear on the first two pieces of *Collected Works*, and Cosi creates each of them on his own. It's fair to ask, however, where amid all this din is Cosi himself?

The 24-year-old Italian multi-instrumentalist has a broad-church musical vision, but in the wake of Google and globalisation, so does everybody else. Rootless multiculturalism is the default, not the exception. Over the course of these three albums, Cosi both falls prey to musical tourism and overcomes it. But his failures as well as his successes should interest us. Taken together they reveal a route out of superficial genre-clash and into deeper sonic investigation with no sacrificing of exploratory, openminded spirit.

Cosi's artistic evolution follows a familiar arc. Classical conservatory training (in the saxophone) gets balanced by the discovery of more ecstatic, improvised modes such as drone and noise. Limited resources and opportunities to collaborate then lead him to start woodshedding with electronics and overdubbing. The results are overloaded psychedelic tape fictions, crowded with instrumental distortion, jarring cuts, distended drones and genre mutation on the scale of Jan Anderzén's Kemialliset Ystävät or Phil Todd's Ashtray Navigations. Cosi, though, has a whole other dimension to explore, his strong instrumental presence on saxophone, and it's this dimension that eventually shows him to be a singular figure.

Collected Works samples a number of these experiments recorded between 2005 and 2008. Cosi's particular brand of psychedelic excess shines on "I Wanna Be Free". Starting with one of his favoured polyrhythmic webs, his horn hovers over the commotion until a second recording of what sounds like a free jazz trio in full flight is thrust into the mix. The distortion echoes the blasted, claustrophobic fidelity of the contemporary noise cassette underground. "Silver Stars And Moon", in a little more than four minutes, juxtaposes electroacoustic drone, Coltrane ballad sax, primal rhythmic grids and qawwali-like tabla beats.

When he cleaves too close to fuzzy multicultural statements (the humid percussive rackets of "Mak-ng Love In Lhasa" and "Mozambico") or merely pays tribute to his copious influences (the Ornette Coleman inspired swing of "Lovely Blue Cream" and the avant funk Can groove of "Hoboland"), Cosi's vision becomes hazy. The ten pieces on *Collected Works*, while audacious, describe a young man's idea of the perfect musical cosmos simply telling us what we already know about these styles. It's broadminded but too literal, suggesting Cosi is too infatuated with surface.

It takes collaboration with fellow Italian underground figure Fabio Orsi to clarify Cosi's vision. Orsi has a vocabulary of patient, abstract extended electronic loops, and is adept at turning subtle textures into glacial themes. Cosi, mostly playing saxophone, benefits from this focus. Cosi's work is stripped of its more obvious allusions, and from just a single source manifests a profusion of ideas.

Bringing the same liberal approach to the saxophone as his compositions, he uses his horn broadly as a tonal generating device. Throughout the disc, he loops, blends, processes and overdubs it into the fabric of Orsi's drones. He sits back for the first half of "Cold Fusion (In Our Fingers)", adding arcing laments to Orsi's slow-bellows pulse; for the second half he replicates his horn into a marching bustling procession. "We Could For Hours Part Two" pushes this anthemic quality to orchestral critical mass. Midway, the atmospheres swells with dissonant block chords, fragments of chanting saxophone, vocal samples, and plangent arco-like timbres in the upper register. Cosi's work with Orsi surpasses the danse atmospheres of *Collected Works*, engaging deeply with the sounds themselves rather than musical styles.

Heavy Electronic Pacific Rock continues this engagement and represents a significant shift forward. Featuring four of his longform solo works, the record possesses the same questing musical intelligence as his earlier pieces, but highlights compositional ideas, not influences. Less collage than cubist, the pieces show Cosi's work is much more than just shoehorning an eclectic range of styles into a single piece. Over its 20 minutes, "Study For Saxophone And Electronics" mutates a phalanx of horns in Terry Riley hall-of-mirrors style, passing through bright and brassy fanfares, low-reg ster dirges, and eventually sublimating into a great cloud of warm analogue static. With his saxophone as the focus, he carefully evolves single themes instead of layering many. The slap motion of "The North Pole Vibes" unfolds on the back of a patient, naked theme on sax, while reverb drift and gentle cymbal textures diffuse into a detailed ambience. It's Cosi at his most subtle and mature.

Describing his saxophone playing, Cosi says he looks for shapes rather than clear note sequences. It's a description that can be further extended to cover this decade's explosion of aggressive, underground psychedelia: the urge is to look beyond notes, patterns and styles, to unify dissonance, incongruity and variety into idiosyncratic forms of harmony. On "A New Vipassana", Cosi overdubs a spectrum of saxophone sounds into a feverish drone, like a merging of Rahsaan Roland Kirk's polyphonic spree with Carnatic brass band music. It is quintessential Cosi: a piece that can begin anywhere, never really ends, and maps a dizzying array of approaches as it progresses. With it Cosi puts himself at the forefront of deep-listening psych practioners, and challenges us to look for more than one unique voice in his music – we should be looking for many. □

Demons" is Baroque unbound by the arbitrary and oppressive strictures of 17th century hierarchy and order, and gets to float, echo and luxuriate in the space in which it takes place, through the palace grounds themselves, rather than be formally contained by the repressive grandiosity of Versailles. One could be sour and argue that by simply letting these Baroque textures fly and erupt where they may, without narrative or construction, is the equivalent of letting off fireworks – spectacle and colour for their own sake. However, the final track, "Lully's Turquerie' As Interpreted By An Advance Script", shows how conversant Murcof is with his source material and how intelligently he reworks it. In recent times, there has been a revival of "Early Music", appealing to those fatigued by classical modernity. This represents a splendid riposte to all that.

David Stubbs

Moritz von Oswald & Carl Craig
Recomposed By Carl Craig & Moritz Von Oswald
Deutsche Grammofon CD

The crossover between classical and club music is rarely successful; conflicts of virtuosity, conceptual rigour, technological capability and simple aesthetics often make for an odd sort of mismatch. That Carl Craig and Moritz von Oswald are at the helm on this project, remixing Ravel's *Bolero* and *Rhapsodie Espagnole* and Mussorgsky's *Pictures At An Exhibition* (as performed in 1987 by Herbert von Karajan's Berlin Philharmonic), raises expectations somewhat. But even the remixers' resumés don't prepare you for this exercise in longform collage and canny Techno retrofitting.

Given access to the original multi-track recordings, Craig and von Oswald wisely decide stick to their strengths, breaking the music down to its atomic level and building up cycling, looped orchestral phrases that trace a line from Ravel's repetitive figures through classical American minimalism to German psychedelics like Manuel Göttsching. Techno is the logical end-point, but even so, the genre's kick drums and flickering synthesizers only occasionally take the fore.

The 64 minute 'recomposition' is divided into eight parts, but it plays out in an unbroken arc. There are nominally Ambient passages resembling the massive orchestral atmospheres of Wolfgang Voigt's GAS project, and long, shifting passages of basic Channel pitter-patter washed in dub delay. These are expected. But wrapped around them are semple patterns guided by the most active kind of listening. They make neat musicological arguments – Spanish phrases give way to shuffling Afro-Latin percussion, tracing colonial histories via the evolution of popular musical forms. Ravel's jazz sympathies anticipate European electronic music's debt to Detroit and Chicago. But these merely academic arguments pale next to the music's visceral thrills. It's no secret that Techno could use some fresh energy, with *Recomposed* the classical canon gives it an unexpected jolt.

Philip Sherburne

Anthony Peteras
Chromatophore
Tzadik CD

Anthony Pateras is an Australian who understands the real problems facing proper composers' today: the need for engagement with both contemporary sound practice and the artistic concerns of an audience alert for new ideas. This, his second album for Tzadik, once more addresses these fundamental concerns head-on. Most of his methods are musical – but from this he does not wrongly extrapolate as many other composers have the illegitimate conclusion that his actual business is music. Anthony Pateras works with sound – by any means necessary – even means that are not actually 'musical composition' at all.

This album quite deliberately includes one rather demanding analogue synthesizer improvisation. Even the less outre items collected here include electroacoustic elements, and the recording process itself plays an integral role in the realisation of all of the pieces. The title track is for a string octet whose instruments have been amplified, thereby made to sound as though they are whizzing in and out of hearing range like a swarm of giant insects. Almost the straightest piece is a percussion quartet with a positively Nancarrow-esque attack, while *Autophogy* mischievously features amplification again, live sound diffusion and MAX/MSP programming, as well as live electronics and a prepared piano. All this in a commission from The Australian Chamber Orchestra – one wonders if they knew who they were picking? The live performance recording of this piece is the highlight of this uniformly adventurous body of work.

Bruce Russell

Benoît Pioulard
Temper
Kranky CD/LP/Download

The name Benoît Pioulard came from a dream and the gauzy folk that Thomas Meluch authors under that pseudonym seems to share the same origin. *Temper* is the second Pioulard album on Kranky which couldn't have been a better fit as a label. Just as Stars Of The Lid and Labradford perfected their reconfigurations of Ambient-style sounds with skeletal melodicism, Pioulard's work is a remarkably effortless cohabitation between bedroom electronics and wistful songwriting.

Bridging each and every song are interludes of very lo-fi field recordings on handheld tape recorders, with no attempt to remove the mechanical clatter, creppy microphone hiss and low-impact white noise. Pioulard has no interest in pure documentation, but rather in manifesting a mood of half-remembered images of a rainstorm, or a field of damp poppies, or a comforting pot of tea. Although the songs have a fine mist of reverb and delay, they are bright and sparkling compared to these sodden interludes. But as on his field recordings, Pioulard doesn't really let us into the narration of his songs: his breathy baritone mumbles all consonants and vowels into maudlin tunes as memorable as they are indecipherable. The arrangements on acoustic guitar with a bass here, a dulcimer there are curiously rich for all of their simplicity. Pioulard has a knack for embedding subcutaneous melodies well below the minor-key guitar strum.

Temper could have become a baroque production, but Pioulard has the sense to hold back on much of the detail. He's giving the audience an invitation to fill in those blanks, and as a result, his album is much better for it.

Jim Haynes

Joe Preston & Daniel Menche
Cerebric Doxology
Anthem CD+DVD

Responsible for one-man Metal machine grind group Thrones, Joe Preston also has links with Melvins, Earth, Sunn O))). High On Fire and, more recently, San Francisco alternative herd rock veterans Harvey Milk, of whom he has since become a permanent member. Daniel Menche's CV is equally impressive, with many solo projects alongside recorded meetings with noise luminaries such as Kevin Drumm, Andrew Liles and Zbigniew Karkowski. The artists are ideally teamed, as this astonishing, sometimes unsettling but ultimately uplifting work clearly testifies.

Presented as a CD/DVD dual disc, the black and white footage of harsh landscapes, smoking craters, mysterious monoliths and slumbering wildlife resonate perfectly with Preston and Menche's toxic soundtrack, a vocal collage of growling chant, symphonic chorelising and eruptive throat gargling that grows in intensity as the piece unfolds. The footage slips and blurs, transforming the dino's grainy footage of the Great Pacific Northwest into an apocalyptic postcard from hell, an alien landscape adrift from time and space.

It is Preston and Menche's stately Gothic chant, however, that anchors the work and gives it an organic power, where their mantra eventually tunes in with the billowing natural phenomena captured on film – at times assuming the vocal equivalent of a seismic shift of the Earth's crust. In short, this rocks.

Edwin Pouncey

Eliane Radigue
Naldjorlak
Shiin CD

Most of Eliane Radigue's music has been made using analogue synthesizers. *Naldjorlak* is an hour-long piece conceived for cello, an instrument physically well suited to approximate acoustically some of the textures and timbres she customarily generates electronically. In this realisation, recorded in a chapel in Paris in September 2006, American cellist Charles Curtis pursues the wolf tone – where the instrument's wooden body resonates in raw accord with the bowed note and produces a queasy overtone. Through judicious tuning, the entire cello is focused into this unsettling phenomenon, and intense concentration upon its vibratory wavering is sustained through the piece's slow changes over the course of an hour.

As Curtis points out in his liner notes, the requirements of this music invert the conventional function of tuning – confirmation of concert pitch that binds the instrument to a social norm. Listening to a Bach cello suite, you may detect the assumptions of virtuoso individualism within a thriving Lutheran community; in Radigue's solo cello piece you are confronted with the contemplative interiority and cosmological strangeness of her Tibetan Buddhist faith. Curtis, who has studied with the great Indian singer Pandit Pran Nath and with La Monte Young, is well suited to interpret *Naldjorlak*'s challenging combination of spectral complexity and introspective minimalism. For Radigue, the introspection is undoubtedly a route to some profound sense of universal connection – the kind of concentrat on on a single point that enables you to access all points. Not all listeners will choose to accompany her on that route, travelling in a kind of animated suspension, detached from familiar features of the musical landscape. Others will recognise its value and understand its satisfactions.

Julian Cowley

Alexander von Schlippenbach
Piano Solo 77
FMP CD

Schlippenbach's Globe Unity Orchestra had been functioning intermittently for a decade when these solo improvisations were recorded, and the epochal duo with Sunny Murray documented on *Smoke* was more than a decade in the future. So this music finds the pianist at a key moment of development.

There's something intensely private about the playing, an impression confirmed by the circumstances of recording. Every day at this time, Schlippenbach walked the couple of miles from his home to a youth club on Olberstrasse, Berlin, and in an unlit windowless cellar spent the day pushing his technique to its extremes.

Schlippenbach has never belonged in that loose, baggy category of players influenced by Cecil Taylor. Very few so designated really are, and Schlippenbach is far closer in spirit and articulation to Thelonious Monk, as he has demonstrated many times down the years. The impression here, intriguingly, is of much older styles: boogie, rag and stride taken to levels that seem at the limits of human performability, elements of Art Tatum particularly the two-handedness evolving on "Brooks" that creates the momentary illusion of a second player, surprisingly little from the other wing of bebop represented by Bud Powell.

On the lengthy "Lhotse", Schlippenbach develops what became a distinctive device, building long, ladder-like scales in the bass against a busy ripple in the treble that seems to resist synthesis, both harmonically and rhythmically, but which nonetheless delivers an unexpected coherence. Fierce and outwardly chaotic though some of these exercises are, the abiding impression is of form and structure, albeit somewhat below immediate audibility. More than just a period piece, this offers important insight into the evolution of a major European musician.

Brian Morton

Christina Sahnaoui & Michal Walsvisz
Shortwave
Al Maslakh CD
When Michel Walsvisz passed away earlier this year aged only 58 the European improvised music community lost one of its most original voices. Walsvisz is best loved by record collectors and fans of unclassifiable sound for his 1977 album *Crackle*, one of the most radical recordings in the entire FMP catalogue. Walsvisz was an inventor of electronic instruments and held strong views about the need for musicians to take a more active role in forging and modifying their own tools as opposed to playing them straight out of the box. *Crackle* was based around sounds made by a 'crackle box', a handheld analogue audio synth with built-in speaker that had a disruptive sound which was more tactile and body-informed than most early electronic instruments. Although Walsvisz's commitment was to the improvised music and free jazz community, *Crackle*'s appearance on the notorious Nurse With Wound list saw him hailed as a pioneer by various noise and industrial activists.

Walsvisz had little interest in documenting his inventions as a bare handful of recordings testify and *Crackle* remains the centrepiece of his scant back catalogue. *Shortwave*, a duo set with alto saxophonist Christine Sahnaoui recorded in late 2006, was his first studio recording since the late 1970s. Here Walsvisz plays 'the hands', another handheld invention that consists of a combination of a tiny keyboard and a set of sensors that track and respond to the movement of the hands and arms in space.

The music has a lucid spatial aspect with Walsvisz conjuring a rush of high-flying tone that zooms between the speakers in bursts of celestial energy. The singular 'thingness' of 'the hands' make it a tough instrument to establish any kind of reciprocal relationship with, but Sahnaoui makes it work by approaching the saxophone as if she had encountered it for the first time, generating events by exaggerating 'wrong' techniques thus reducing it to a similar object status. She plugs her tongue into the mouthpiece and draws sound up from her throat, rolls out extended drones, shuffles between valve clanks and mouth soundings while Walsvisz combines an illuminated backdrop of pregnant radio tones with sudden eruptions of orchestrated violence. Most startling of all, it doesn't sound like improvised music lending further weight to Walsvisz's lifelong insistence on the personalisation of the instrument as a necessary first step towards a non-cliched, individually expressive form of instant composition.
David Keenan

J Spaceman & Matthew Shipp
SpaceShipp
Treader CD
This is a collaboration that had to happen if only to justify the title, a name based pun almost worthy of Lee Konitz, and evidence that even the boldest of sonic adventurers aren't averse to a giggle or two. As expected, the humour doesn't extend to the music itself, a vast, cathedralesque drone constructed at Abbey Road Studios with Shipp's celeste and GoldenVoice harmonium and Spaceman (aka Jason Pierce)'s Vox Starstreamer, a studio follow-up to the duo's debut at the Patti Smith-curated Meltdown Festival in 2005.

As with much of Pierce's work – within and outside of his avant pop arkestra Spiritualized – *SpaceShipp*'s vocabulary is drawn as much from the language of religious music from plainsong to gospel as it is from the drone tradition established by La Monte Young. The opening "Inner" shifts amorphously between holy ecstasy and a deep sense of foreboding, enormity presenting itself as both immersive and cosmically intimidating. Its companion "Outer" is markedly less monolithic, beginning with delicate notes plucked on the celeste while Pierce grinds out an abrasive, metallic drone on the Starstreamer. On both tracks, Shipp subsumes his virtuosity in an act of surrender which is both surprising and touching, placing complete faith in his collaborator and the formidable noise they summon with the relatively limited means at their disposal.
Joseph Stannard

Squarepusher
Jnst A Souvenir
Warp CD/LP/Download
I once knew an Underground Resistance obsessive who, whenever I brought up anything on Warp – Plaid, Plone, Boards Of Canada...even Autechre – would shake his head and just murmur "kitsch... kitsch". A swathe of Squarepusher's new album – Tom Jenkinson's tenth under the name by my count – does nothing to challenge this view with some of it recalling Jim Tenor at his most rinky-dink. "Star Time 2" is a cocktail of Mnzak and Library Mus c noodling. "A Real Woman" sticks Kraftwerked vocals and synths over a lounge rhythm section rigid with Ritalin. *"You're really great! / You have feelings! / You are real! / You exist!"* Jenkinson exults, amid fiddly Mahavishnu/Weather Report breakdowns. The rest of the album is largely heavier and darker: there's plenty of whiplash Prog-punk ("Delta V" "Tensor In Green", "The Glass Road") which would be equally (if not more) at home on Tzadik than Warp, all driven by Jenkinson's trademark virtuoso bass playing. The microtooled percussive corkscrews that he used to fashion from fragments of the Amen break are now replaced by live drums, but the compulsive need to speed up, to complicate, to floor the pedal, maintains an atmosphere no less feverish than Squarepusher's older drill 'n' bass modes.

It all makes for an album which is strangely boring: the baroque detailing becomes an inaudible blur. One critical meme concerning Squarepusher is the comparison with Miles Davis and/or Tao Macaro, because of his interest in jazz fusion and sound editing, but surely John McLaughlin is the real comparison for this bitches' brew. Davis was famous for his use of space; Jenkinson abhors a vacuum. McLaughlin and Jenkinson have a similar problem: what to do with all that technical ability? Perhaps Squarepusher will one day make an album as stripped down and way-out as McLaughlin's *My Goal's Beyond* – but *Just A Souvenir* suggests it's some way off.
Sam Davies

Starkey
Ephemeral Exhibits
Planet Mu CD/3×LP
Against this decade's narratives of globalisation and the homogenisation of cultural identities, Grime has remained stubbornly localised. Despite its history being bound up in the internet – particularly file sharing and Internet messageboards – its heartland remains a few square miles in East London. The very existence of *Ephemeral Exhibits*, an instrumental Grime album made in Philadelphia, says something intriguing about the genre. A few years ago, instrumental Grime was just school friends and acquaintances making backing tracks for MCs, and what *this* scene produced was Grime, and for *that* reason, rather than common sonic threads (compare the luscious swirls of Ruff Sqwad with the skeletal booms of Musical Mob's "Pulse X").

Now it has coalesced into a distinct sound, a US Grime album is a perfectly coherent concept. *Ephemeral Exhibits* is compressed into mid-range blasts of yowling, plastic synth lines over peg-legged stutter-beats. At points, most notably on opener "Gutter Music", Starkey achieves the melodic brutalism of Wiley or Danny Weed: square wave arpeggios flit round each other, combining into rivulets of molten silver sound. While much Grime has a lucid, poetic elegance to its formal simplicity, Starkey pitchshifts his synths into harsh – and eventually grating – abstractions. Here links are drawn with earlier dancefloors, electro, Techno, and Hardcore. Perhaps Starkey's distance from Grime's epicentre has allowed him to see the forest for the trees, and locate its place within a tangled history of electronic dance music.
Simon Hampson

Joel Stern
Objects, Masks, Props
Naturestrip CD
For the past six years, Australian Joel Stern has been assembling the raw material that would become this album's eight soundscapes. His experiences during this period – Improv workshops in London with Eddie Prevost, collaborations with Anthony Guerra and Jim Denley, travels through Kenya, Ethiopia and India – his sound sculptures, experiments in cinema and live soundtracking, running the Naturestrip label – all somehow get manifested in his teaming environments.

He synthesises this diversity through an array of methods. He crops sounds like a musique concrete technician, captures environmental detail like a field recordist, loops and processes elements with the subtlety of an electronica artist, and shapes half-melodies and shambling pulses like an improvisor. He is concerned, above all, with creating depth and activity. To achieve these, he avoids giving his pieces any typical musical structures. On "Dead Lakes",

Musica Elettronica Viva
MEV 40 (1967–2007)
Alvin Curran, Frederic Rzewski, Richard Teitelbaum, Steve Lacy, Garrett List, George Lewis, Allan Bryant, Carol Plantamura, Ivan Vandor, Gregory Reeve
This 4-CD set, covering the years 1967–2007, comprises the best surviving recorded documents from four decades of performances, personally curated by its three core members — Alvin Curran, Frederic Rzewski, and Richard Teitelbaum. An invaluable historical anthology of one of the pioneering and truly legendary exponents of live-electronic music.
80675 (4 CDs)

The Stroke That Kills
Eve Beglarian, Alvin Curran, David Dramm, Michael Foley, Ron Johnson, Gustavo Matamoros, Seth Josel, electric guitar
80661

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animal howls and the patter of rain sit as prominently in the mix as the hypnotic thumb piano riffs. He eschews climax and ends each piece abruptly, seemingly mid-thought. Ebb and flow – loud to soft, crowded to sparse, chaotic to meditative – are his only compositional tools.

With instrumental and organic sources recorded in intimate and enormous detail, Stern creates an evocative blend of manmade and natural sound. "Throat Priest" merges radio transmissions with recordings of religious chants, bird calls and cinema dialogue. "Fortitudes End" folds the chatter of children and running water into a lamenting melody on guitar and concertina. The album dissolves specific spaces, replacing them with oblique audio narratives of places that are part reality, part imagination.

Matthew Wuethrich

John Stevens Trio
Live At The Plough
Ayler CD/Download

Two days after I first moved to London, I caught a truly memorable gig by The Mike Osborne Trio. I was already well aware of the alto saxophonist's fierce eloquence through his recordings with The Brotherhood Of Breath, The Mike Westbrook Orchestra, his adventurous work with fellow saxophonists John Surman and Alan Skidmore, and his wonderfully taut live recording *All Night Long* (1975), with bassist Harry Miller and drummer Louis Moholo. During the decade when the British jazz scene was at its most exhilarating, Mike Osborne was at its heart. Then, in 1982, mental illness silenced him and last year he died.

Live At The Plough captures the sound of Osborne in March 1979, with bassist Paul Rogers in a trio led by drummer John Stevens. The South London pub was a crucial venue at that time, but Stevens can still be heard here asking staff to turn down a jukebox – conditions were far from ideal. The recording is boxy and erratic, but the music is fiery and fine. The propulsive bounce that Stevens used to lift the abstractions of his Spontaneous Music Ensemble takes on the role of irrepressible post-bop pulse. Rogers is appropriately supple and springy, and Osborne sears through the standards "Cherokee" and "Summertime", Jackie McLean's "Blue Rondo" and four of his own originals with his usual burning urgency and incisive tone. It gets murky at times, but for me this is an unequivocally welcome chance to hear the pressure-cooker intensity of a real creative need finding its voice.

Julian Cowley

Sunn O)))
Domkirke
Southern Lord 2×LP

In March 2007 Sunn O))) performed in Bergen Cathedral, Norway at the request of the Borealis Festival. This record of the concert suggests they were in their natural element, and not just because of the drone duo's habitual live garb of monks' robes. In the sleevenotes, festival director Nicholas H Mellerhaug explains the commission by drawing parallels between the sombre unison melodies of late medieval hymns and Stephen O'Malley and Greg Anderson's drumless moulding of Metal riffs into dense slabs that move with geological slowness, a suitably downbeat homage to an era of widespread war, famine and Black Death. But *Domkirke* also has a strong architectural dimension, the group's visceral low frequencies a sonic complement to the cathedral's physical and spiritual presence.

Some suitably doom-friendly guests were at hand. Mayhem vocalist Attila Csihar, Norwegian musician Lasse Marhaug on electronics and Earth's Steve Moore, playing the cathedral's organ. Of the four tracks (one for each LP side), their input is most notable on the first, "Why Dost Thou Hide Thyself In Clouds?". A slowly pulsing drone is joined by sustained organ notes as Csihar's vocals rise from low guttural growl to stark howls, sounding alternately enraged and bereft, like the jealous God of the Old Testament finding himself irrelevant and blasphemed.

The remaining three tracks may not achieve quite the levels of divine terror, but they still impress. "Cannon" pits a sluggish riff against a more urgent, clanging reply and some malevolently hissed vocals; "Cymatics" adds extra reverb into the densely oppressive sonic space, while beneath a steely organ glint, the slow-motion implosion of "Masks The Ætmospheres" creates the image of group, audience and cathedral floor sinking inexorably into Hell.

Abi Bliss

Alexis Taylor
Rubbed Out
Treader CD

Here's a collision of unlikely anomalies: the Treader label, Spring Heel Jack's austere repository of serious improv, releasing its very first song-based project – a homemade collection of lo-fi introspection by a member of the major-label electro-pop outfit Hot Chip. Homemade is the defining term. The liner notes suggest it was recorded "at home" and there's a certain kitchen-table kitsch at work. Several songs are based around primitive keyboard sounds, including clunky preset percussion effects, topped off with unsophisticated vocals captured through a cheap mic.

But its overall effect is more John Shuttleworth than Wesley Willis. In fact, while this album, at first glance, borrows the aesthetic and ambience of confessional loner-song, on closer inspection it reflects a suspiciously false sheen, rather than a real personality: we encounter a disingenuously created persona. When Taylor sings, "*You're my collector's item*", can he really be doing anything other than playing up to Hot Chip's carefully constructed nerdy image, trotting out an obvious trope of geekdom that – just like his Napoleon Dynamite spectacles – betrays not a clueless loser but a savvy operator dealing in self-conscious irony?

Musically, the songs are more satisfying when rounded out to a group sound, with John Coxon on guitar and Rupert Clervaux on drums and there's a ramshackle jauntiness and almost a naïve charm to the teenage love-affair lament of "Baby, What Is Wrong?". At least there might be if you felt it was actually a heartfelt question, rather than an exercise in arch cliché. Perhaps Taylor comes closest to real insight when he sings, "*I started feeling like a plastic man*."

Daniel Spicer

David Thomas & Two Pale Boys
A Map Only Tells Me What I Already Know: Live In Europe 2001
Headpen Download

David Thomas's onstage persona is an unsettling mix of shaman, performance artist and working class crank. His lyrics revolve around images of closed factories, lights in the distance and long midnight drives through what's frequently described as "flyover country" – not so much the old, weird America as 'the slowly dying America'. These live recordings are not songs as much as onstage improvisations around the aforementioned themes (also explored on The Pale Boys' studio album *Surf's Up!* and its predecessor, 1999's *Mirror Man*). There are two versions each of "Night Driving" from *Surf's Up!* and "Lost Nation Road" from *Mirror Man*, as well as run-throughs – the former relatively straightforward, the latter apocalyptic – of the Pere Ubu tracks "Non-Alignment Pact" and "Thirty Seconds Over Tokyo", but everything else is improvised and all the more compelling for it.

Instrumentalists Keith Moliné and Andy Diagram, on guitar and trumpet respectively with a host of effects, create the illusion of a much larger group: over their swirls of sound, Thomas mutters and howls about bridges, drunk driving and shooting out one's television set. The lyrics are elliptical but, taken together, embody a world view that's part Springsteen, part Bukowski, while remaining pierc-ingly aware of the performative aspect at all times: "*That's not much of a song*", he croons at the end of "River", and the drunk driving talk on "Lost Nation Road" inspires a great bit of stage banter, as a deadpan Thomas informs the audience that the Dutch government requires him to state that his exhortations – "*Let's get drunk and drive real fast*" – are merely metaphorical and not behaviour to be emulated. The last words heard are "*I hope you're satisfied now*." Yes. Yes, we are.

Phil Freeman

Francesco Tristano
Auricle/Bio/On
InFine CD/LP/Download

By day Francesco Tristano is a classically trained concert pianist, an established wower of the Carnegie Hall crowd; but by night he's a Techno prowler, promoting and DJing at parties across New York. On *Auricle/Bio/On*, Tristano joins the dots between these two worlds, pulling the Steinway down off its stage-throne and installing it on the dancefloor.

The most stimulating moments on the record are in the opening minutes of the first track, where the piano transforms itself into an analogue synth. The hammered staccato discords that begin the piece could have been plucked straight from a Boulez piano sonata; the heavy reverb merely the echoey acoustic of a large concert hall. But on another heavily accented discord, the stereo delay kicks in, revealing the ambience's artificial provenance. As Tristano's improvisation develops, the amount of processing on the piano sound is slowly increased, transforming the instrument into a gong-like FM synth. The piano de-pianoed, the Techno can begin, heralded by minimal's instantly familiar click-hats.

Besides these moments of sonic alchemy, the bulk of *Auricle/Bio/On* actually sounds fairly conventional: by-the-book dub Techno with the transmogrified piano providing the characteristic delay-heavy chord stab. The rhythm programming is not inelegant – functional, unadorned – but it's the processed piano that provides the main interest, ringing out across meticulously vectored filter manipulations. *Auricle/Bio/On* is a captivating listen, but this is largely thanks to dub Techno's customary hypnotic charms. Ultimately it is a little disappointing to hear such a familiar sound coming from a record professing revolutionary intent.

Nick Richardsen

Uton
We're Only In It For The Spirit
Digitalis CD/Download

Dark drones, flickering electronics, nervy rustling and moaning voices – that's the stuff of Finnish musician Jani Hirvonen's projects in the guise of Uton. The four "untitled jewel tracks" on the limited edition release *We're Only In It For The Spirit* pulsate, murmur and clang. The sound is murky and lo-fi, penetrated now and again by odd glimmers. Assisted by Jari-Pekka Koho, from the Ambient improvising outfit Vapaa, Uton recorded these vaguely sinister soundscapes in the lake-ringed city of Tampere in 2006. Strangely for such intangible pieces, they imply the directness and thrust of rock music. They hang in the air like the ectoplasm of rock, lingering spookily in the aftermath of some vanished gig.

One way to revitalise a genre is to lift elements from the periphery of its auditory field and make them central. Electronica's sanctification of the glitch is an extreme instance. Vintage psychedelia was richly embroidered with incidental detail. Acid Mothers Temple have regularly focused on those ornamental aspects of the genre's sonic kaleidoscope with spectacular results. Uton captures psych rock ambience filleted from its riff. The brashness of electric guitar music persists in ghostly form. The singing is plain demotic stretched out into weirdness. It's almost as though traces of some vintage freakout by Hawkwind or Amon Düül I has returned to Earth after decades spent circulating the cosmos. The music has decayed in the process, leaving just the aura to be retrieved by Uton's antennae.

Julian Cowley

Alex Ward
Cremated Thoughts
Treader CD

I had thought of starting this review with a jokey conceit along the lines of Ward being a kind of Improv Macaulay Culkin – coming to attention in his early teens by knocking much older and more experienced men down

with his inventiveness impressing listeners at the 1988 Company Week with the maturity and incisiveness of his clarinet playing – but then I thought better of it.

Despite a superb debut for Incus (*Ya Boo Reel And Rumble*, with Steve Noble), Ward has never made as big an impression on the public consciousness as expected. Since that album he has been involved with various excellent projects such as 13 Ghosts, False Face Society (which showcased his guitar playing) and Limescale, as well as a magnificent encounter with Derek Bailey (*LOCotionAL*, recorded in 1998) that proved his prodigydom was no flash in the pan.

On this Treader session, cut at Abbey Road, he again fails to disappoint. Four solo improvisations display unabated inventiveness and technical accomplishment. "CT One" begins abstractly, with Ward creating counterpoints of harmonics, key-flapping and conventional note production, setting them off with strategically placed pauses, moving through passages of assured melody and concluding with discreet multiphonics and hypersonics. "CT Two" kicks off from flurries of twittering and purring to examine various staccato sounds. "CT Three", rooted in phrases in the chalumeau register, tests different textures, gradually introducing higher pitches.

No matter how abstract he gets, there is always a deep vein of lyricism in Ward's playing, as well as a vision and cohesiveness which imparts a strong sense of inexorability to his improvisations. For my 10 pence Ward can easily bear comparison with such revered figures as John Butcher, and this is undoubtedly one of the finest, most consistently engaging albums of the year.
Barry Witherden

Way Of Tha Crosa
Mind Of The Dolphin
Phean x LP

The international psych-folk underground lends itself well to loose, temporary agglomerations, hybrid forms fashioned from bits and pieces of other groups. The music itself is often dissolute, and can therefore easily accommodate contributions from kindred outsiders and likeminded travellers. Such is the case with Way Of The Crosa, a kind of American-Finnish supergroup consisting of various members of No Neck Blues Band, The Skaters, Kuupuu and Kemialliset Ystävät, named after "The White Goddess", the Ninefold Muse, patroness of the white magic of poetry."

Mind Of The Dolphin almost justifies the mystic gibberish, being a fulsome, satisfying sonic artefact in its own right, rather than an unbound jack-off session designed only to entertain its participants. The most attractive element is the rhythmic pulse typified by "Unconsummated Seduction", an exercise in campfire trance which takes up the B side of this vinyl-only release and travels nowhere, but does so beautifully. There's certainly little here to shock or surprise anyone au fait with the work of any of the above-mentioned outfits, but the intimate focus and determined air of these cyclical reveries are worthy of serious investigation, and for those yet to dip a toe into this particular pool, *Mind Of The Dolphin* could serve as a suitable point of entry.
Joseph Stannard

Jah Wobble & Tha Chinese Dub Orchestra
Chinese Dub
30 Hertz CD

Jah Wobble is a paradoxical character: both trailblazer and homeboy, whose musical explorations, from English folk to World Music, have all been, to some degree, characterised by, and anchored to, his signature bass-driven sound. At its best this has made for some unlikely but intriguing hookups, which have established Wobble as completely his own man, pursuing his particular restless muse. The downside is that his manifold influences and collaborations can end up being steamrollered by the dominant bass, flattened into sounding too generic, even if the genre in question is of Wobble's own creation.

Happily, *Chinese Dub* feels utterly organic, a sound initially road-tasted in a series of live performances by Wobble, his wife the guzheng player Zi Lan Liao, and regular collaborators including *The Wire*'s Clive Bell. The studio album (which includes one live cut) retains a sense of creative momentum while also shaping up as a kind of self-contained chronology with a unique sense of character. The contrast between the metallic, chiming upper register of the traditional Chinese instruments – guzheng (Chinese zither), pluta and horsehead fiddle – and Wobble's loping, thunderous basslines is the chief source of the album's dynamic thrust. But both Wobble's own compositions and his adaptations of Chinese folk songs are sympathetic to the essential character of the traditional sound, to the extent that the bass appears to be led, rather than Wobble's formidable grooves setting the pace. The balance between rhythm and melody is maintained, but allows for enough of an impact from a propulsive low-end to keep this from sounding like too polite an exercise.
Tom Ridge

Savina Yannatou & Primavara En Salonico
Songs Of An Other
ECM CD

This third ECM recording by the Greek singer Yannatou and her ensemble Primavera En Salonico is a ravishing confirmation of a theory I have long held that the musics of the 'Sea Peoples' – adventurous Mediterranean travellers and traders who explored this inland sea thousands of years ago – are all part of a flux or continuum of shared musical reverberating around the Mediterranean shores over the centuries. Her punning multiculturalism itself alludes to its cross-culturalintentions. What gives Yannatou's music a special resonance, however, is her and her group's improvising jazz background, even though Yannatou's training was chiefly with the revered Greek modern classical composer Manos Hadjidakis.

Yannatou can sometimes sound like a classical folk singer observing her traditions but the improvising nature of her group creates a space where she can sing scat, Sprechstimme or wild vocalese that can recall, variously, the antics of Cathy Berberian, sometimes Lotte Lenya, a dash of Natacha Atlas, while at others the poetics of a Karin Krog, or the avant garde tactics of a Maggie Nicols or Julie Tippetts. Rest assured, however: this is not music to smash plates to.

These 12 traditional pieces, arranged by accordion and qanun (a form of oud) player and group member Kostas Vomvolos, are traditional works from Armenia, Bulgaria, Greece, Italy, Kazakhstan and Serbia. They are sometimes melancholy, sometimes bucolic, sometimes upside your head spinning dervish-like funk pieces, given a new interpretation by the Can-style improvising philosophy of the group. It could be Oregon, it could be early Weather Report but the most important thing about Yannatou and Primavara en Salonico is that this is the sound of cultures talking to each other, which nowadays we need more than ever.
John Gill

Otomo Yoshihide & Xavier Charles
Difference Between The Two Clocks
Textile CD

Otomo Yoshihide
Core Anode
Maenna CD

Recorded during a 2005 tour of Japan, *Difference Between The Two Clocks* finds Frenchman Xavier Charles on clarinet and Otomo on electric guitar, the latter teasing out threads of feedback for the clarinetist to weave into a tapestry of upper partials and difference tones. For all its subtlety, it's passionate stuff, as exemplified by Charles's urgent gasps for breath and Otomo's omnipresent amp hum, as if the music was just waiting for the perfect opportunity to explode, which it nearly does towards the end of the first track. The three remaining tracks were recorded in Studio Tanker and take fewer risks, but explore the Luciar-like soundworld of acoustic beats with greater precision.

If the Textile disc finds Otomo at his most subtle and sensitive, the live big band (big bang?) project *Core Anode* couldn't be more different. The object here was to surround the listeners with musicians and bombard them relentlessly with the loudest possible sound. Three different versions were selected, the earliest dating from 2002. Ito Atsuhiro's optron (a customised fluorescent light tube) can usually clear a venue within minutes, but combined with Otomo's guitar and a double-barrelled drum attack from Itoken and Uemura Masahiro, it's just an angry blur. The acoustic four years later on the floating venue Stubnitz was drier, and individual voices – four guitars and three drummers – are easier to pick out, but the ear soon gives up nonetheless. The final track, recorded at London's ICA in 2006, features a stellar cast of 14 normally lower case improvisors, including Andrea Neumann, Rhodri and Angharad Davies and Tim Barnes. If you like your noise muddy and messy, this is for you, if you prefer something more focused and powerful, there are plenty of other albums in the sprawling Otomo discography that do the job much better.
Dan Warburton

The Boomerang

New reissues rated on the rebound

Art Ensemble Of Chicago
Les Stances A Sophie
Soul Jazz CD
The Art Ensemble Of Chicago recorded the soundtrack for Moshe Mizrahi s movie *Les Stances A Sophie* (see On Screen) in Boulogne in July 1970. The music is episodic and stylistically varied. In other words, it's a typical AEC set. It was also something of a turning point. The group had spent a highly productive year in France and had recently become a quintet with the addition of drummer Don Moye. The opening "Theme For Yoyo" is a marvellous chunk of avant funk. Moye and bassist Malachi Favors do the driving, singer Fontella Bass delivers surreal lyrics as the horns career wildly in and out of the groove. Around that time writer Ishmael Reed declared that a novel could be "anything it wants to be: a vaudeville show, the six o clock news, the mumblings of wild men saddled by demons". The AEC viewed their music in much the same light. *Les Stances A Sophie* combines elements of carnival and earnest research, iconoclasm and respectful parody: fierce tree blowing and cool abstraction. It was actually recorded before Mizrahi's film was made and stands alone as a wonderfully fresh statement of expansive and imaginative music making.
Julien Cowley

George Colemen
Bongo Joe
Mississippi LP
In the early 60s walking down Seawall Boulevard in Galveston, Texas, folks would often wonder why the sound of thunder was filling a clear blue sky. George "Bongo Joe" Coleman had arrived in town on a moped with a 55 gallon oil drum strapped to his back, set up a portable amp miked up to the barrel and whomped away with makeshift mallets and metal pipes, with various sizes of gunshot inside, creating a counterpoint maraca rhythm. Insightful and wryly humorous, his "songs" were more like stories, delivered in a declamatory proto-rap style which would often turn into a conversation with himself, rhyming randomly like a latterday Lee Perry.

Although he played with the likes of Sammy Davis Jr and Dizzy Gillespie, Bongo Joe's stage was the streets, and despite gravitating occasionally to private parties or country fairs he maintained a ruggedly idiosyncratic style in line with the greatest of America's musical mavericks – the opening track here, "I Wish I Could Sing", reveals his penchant for whistling while the tune goes in a slightly different direction, reminiscent of similar attempts by Professor Longhair and Captain Beefheart. Arhoolie Records boss Chris Strachwitz recorded Bongo Joe on the streets of San Antonio in 1968 and the original album issued in 1969 is available on CD, but this release from Mississippi returns the recording to vinyl, where it belongs. After their previous release from the incredible dolceola-playing travelling preacher Washington Phillips, it raises expectations of more unearthed heroes from the lifeblood of American popular music.
Steve Barker

Demon & Neomi
More Sad Hits
20 20 20 CD/LP
Damon Krukowski and Naomi Yang originally released their debut duo album in 1992, under the tutelage of producer Kramer, who helped shape their creative identity as a duo, on the rebound from the disintegration of Galaxie 500 (they had actually retired from the music business the previous year, after releasing an EP as Pierre Etoile). *More Sad Hits* has gained in stature over the years, where originally it seemed to be something of a footnote, a fragile echo of an already brittle-sounding group. In fact it operates on two principles, potentially at odds with one another: firstly, the urge to expand musical horizons beyond the Galaxie 500 blueprint (here, in the process of finding their own voice, they cover Soft Machine and sample *Madame Butterfly*), and secondly, a retreat from the whole being-in-a-group scene, with instead a journey inwards. In a sustained contemplative state. In following both these impulses, and successfully reconciling them, Demon & Neomi create a self-contained world of sound that drifts on softened harmony vocals and the fragile almost bottomless rhythms of sparsely strummed guitars. Kramer skilfully lets this music breathe with only the sparsest of adornments. Newly reissued, this sounds oddly prescient, with a haunting, near-weightless folk-rock quality.
Tom Ridge

Ted Daniel Quintet
Tapestry
Porter CD
Trumpeter Ted Daniel is best known for his work alongside David S Ware in Andrew Cyrille's 1970s group Maono, and a brief partnership with Sonny Sharrock that began with the guitarist's appearance on the sole album by Daniel's group Brute Force, and continued on Sharrock's *Black Woman Tapestry*, recorded in 1974 at Ornette Coleman's Artists House and produced by Noah Howard. Features Daniel's brother and Brute Force bandmate Richard on organ, Khen Jamal on vibes and Jerome Cooper on drums. It's pretty much an archetypal early 70s loft session: three tracks in 35 minutes, with a new 15 minute bonus cut opening this CD. On that track, "Asagefo", Daniel's trumpet lines ripple the air as Jamal's vibes, Richard Daniel's organ and Cooper's percussion create a churning storm of sound. But the title track is spacious and billowing, swinging occasionally but also storming softly like a cross between *In A Silent Way* and Joe McPhee's CjR albums, until Cooper takes over the second half with a five minute drum solo that builds from gentle to crushing. "Sweet Dreams (For Your Eyes)" and "Mozambique" amplify the album's mix of fusion and freedom.
Phil Freeman

Damon & Naomi

Gezo Music From The Kabuki
Various
Nonesuch Explorer CD
Kabuki theatre, being an 'entertainment at any cost' fusion of drama, circus and opera, contains plenty of live music, and big scenes may parade a score of onstage musicians. However, this reissue of a 1966 LP eavesdrops exclusively on the Geza, the backroom boys of kabuki. From offstage they peer through a bamboo blind at the action while playing shamisens, flutes and a lorryload of percussion. This funeful, bright music is not especially virtuosic and may occasionally seem to stumble, but it is multi-functional. The melody tells the audience where we are (city street, noblemen's house, watching a brawl in a brothel) and what to feel (sentimental, religious, ready for a fight). One track is a series of nine sound effects on drum, culminating in "Shinobisanju", which indicates that it's dark. A fascinating repertoire of 18th century programme music played by a crack team of kabuki pros.
Clive Bell

Koto Classics
Various
Nonesuch Explorer CD
This is the latest addition to Nonesuch's ongoing East Asian rerelease programme from their excellent Explorer series. By the time he recorded this 1966 collection of Japanese repertoire, koto master Shinichi Yuize had already contributed to clarinetist Tony Scott's 1964 proto-Ambient improvised set, *Music For Zen Meditation*. He was Artist in Residence at Columbia University when this was taped, and it's simply a very fine koto record. The playing is refined but full of character. Yuize is relaxed on the 18th century "Zangetsu", and refuses to rush his delicate string-bending on "Akikaze". "Chidori" from around 1850 is a setting of a tenth century poem about a plover, during its first minute Yuize selects a variety of string colours, from a dry, lute-like pluck to a ringing open sound. This sensitivity to timbre is a joy to listen to. The koto player's favourite "Midare" ("Disorder") is also here, so named because it broke the pernickety structural rules of 17th century composition.
Clive Bell

La Düsseldorf
La Düsseldorf
Water CD
Viva!
Water CD
Klaus Dinger – who died at the age of 61 in March this year – contributed percussion briefly to Kraftwerk, before forming Neu! with guitarist Michael Rother and crystallizing Krautrock's distinctive mid-paced 4/4 motorik beat. Neu!'s three albums have long ranked in the first division of German releases of that era, and if there was a time when Dinger's next project La Düsseldorf was overshadowed by them, it should have long passed.

Dinger worked with his brother Thomas and Hans Lampe, who had both played on the final *Neu! 75* LP, to make *La Düsseldorf* (1976), *Viva* (1978) and *Individuellos* (1981). Although relatively big sellers at the time, their availability has been patchy since, and the first two that Water have added to their impressive stack of neglected post-60s heaviness have only been in legal CD form as recently as three years ago on Disk Union Japan.

The two albums are characterised by a loose, fresh energy – notably from the live drumming – that has been often remarked as a missing link to 70s punk. Under the plush, cycling layers of synth, piano and guitar, the dual floor tom pulse surges relentlessly and joyfully with mini-crescendos of fills and cymbal hits. Sound effects connect the music to the roar of soccer stadiums, passenger jets and cathedral singing, as well as the stillness of birdsong in the sunshine. The autobahn cruising effect of beat-plus-drone evokes

a sustained euphoria that occasionally erupts in the whooping vocals. Another, perhaps less obvious, historical parallel – at least as close to hand as punk – is Giorgio Moroder's computer disco.
Jon Bywater

Matthew Shipp Trio
The Multiplication Table
hatOLOGY CD
Don't be put off by the gratuitously austere title. *The Multiplication Table* is a powerfully tactile outing by Matthew Shipp's 1997 trio with William Parker (bass) and Susie Ibarra (drums). The three musicians were the rhythm section of The David S Ware Quartet, and the pounding chords and rolling momentum of the opening "Autumn Leaves" point towards the grooves of the Ware group's 1999 *Surrendered*. Shipp's piano introduction begins with a Liberace-like flourish, but soon he's drowning the original changes in incongruous harmonic sidesteps and fretful clusters. "Autumn Leaves" has rarely sounded so fin de siecle.

Shipp plays with our memories of what we think we remember "Autumn Leaves" might have sounded like, a rationale he also brings to "Take The 'A' Train". For a few seconds he and Ibarra evoke Duke Ellington and drummer Sam Woodward before the narrative splinters, and Shipp montages authentic Ellingtonian harmonies with his own extrapolations, and choruses dovetail a straight jazz 'tonr' against a more erratic time-flow. "C Jam Blues" gets the most audacious overhaul – Ellington's two-note riff is subjected to dense spectral harmonisations in a sock to the skeletal clarity of the original. Interspersed between the standards are fulsomely argued but intricate ensemble improvisations, a good Shipp with some lollipops.
Philip Clark

Univers Zéro
Univers Zéro
Cuneiform CD
This is a pleasant surprise: dim and fuzzy memories told me that Belgian Rock In Opposition group Univers Zero were heartless and overbearing, but this, their 1977 debut, is downright enjoyable. With bassoon, viola and harmonium well to the fore, the sound is certainly of a dark brown hue, and there's a furrowed-brow seriousness about these fiendish time signatures. But it's extremely human music – their orchestration is imaginative and endlessly inventive – and rather than gloomy, it's moody and magnificent. Compositions are by drummer Daniel Denis and guitarist Roger Trigaux, whose agenda was to escape the genres of both jazz and rock, exploring European rather than American roots. Thus it sounds like Paul Hindemith meets Igor Stravinsky in a sci-fi bookstore. The LP was originally released as *Univers Zéro* and later renamed *1313* after its catalogue number. Bonus track is "La Faulx", a half hour chunk from their second record *Heresie*. This is considerably scarier, with nimble riffs replaced by Gothic howling and Lucifer-baiting. 30 years on, Denis continues to run Univers Zero as a vehicle for his composing, and their latest release was 2006's *Live*.
Clive Bell

Scott Walker
'Til The Band Comes In
Water CD
The consensus on *'Til The Band Comes In* – released in 1970, right after the run of symphonic solo albums *Scott 1–4* – is that it's beneath consideration, the beginning of Scott Walker's sharp decline into showband kitsch. That's partly true (five of the 15 songs are Vegas-/Countrypolitan-lite covers), but wait a minute. Walker's own songs, co-credited to Israeli manager/svengali Ady Semel, conceal arresting lumps of shit in the cornmeal. Specifically the lyrical surprises. Walker springs a jumbo jet crash in "Little Things (That Keep Us Together)", Spiro Agnew and microfilm in "Jean Machine", Prince Albert in "The War Is Over (Sleepers)" – which could easily have been a ballad from *Scott 2* or *3*, with Walker stretching a lugubrious carapace of vowels over arranger Wally Stott's succulent string nocturne. As a lyricist, Walker deals in delicately poised emotional registers: we can both laugh with and pity "Joe" as he faces death in his old folks' home and the lonely guy in "Time Operator" whose utilities have all been shut off apart from the phone bill, just so he can ask the operator out on a date.

Semel brought in his other protegée, pop star Esther "Cinderella Rockafella" Ofarim, to sing of receiving her lover's ashes on "Long About Now" – the Israeli presence a reminder that Walker né Noel Engel, is a Jew – a fact curiously undiscussed in regard to *The Drift*'s preoccupations with genocide and the kabbalah.

The covers are held back till the last five tracks, so you can actually make it a much better sequence if you simply press eject after track ten. Or maybe not: after all, if I have to hear supper-club schlock I'd rather hear it from Scott than Jack Jones. It may be cheesy, but it's cheese that's curdled.
Rob Young

Robert Wyatt
EPs
Domino 5×CD
Old Rottenhat
Domino CD
Dondeston (Revisited)
Domino CD
Shleep
Domino CD
Cuckooland
Domino CD
The mid-80s, with Thatchenism rampant, were not good times to be an old socialist. Robert Wyatt's records from the period are his most politicised, the singles he made for the right-on Rough Trade label – as befits someone who occasionally contributed to the *Morning Star* – espouse solidarity with the world's workers, from Britain's shipyards to the developing world's refugees. And yet Wyatt's political songs are probably the least agitated agitations on record. Instead there's a note of helplessness to the bitterest songs on *Old Rottenhat* (1985) and *Dondeston* (1991), which like his earlier collection *Nothing Can Stop Us*, were gruff alternative news bulletins from a rogue retired general.

Living in Catalunya for much of the 1980s, and confined to a wheelchair only in body, Wyatt trawled newspapers' books and swept the shortwave dial of his radio set to imbibe the narrative of the world, converting the ongoing colonial/post colonial and corporate disasters into song as they unfolded, from "East Timor" to the fake "third way" of the British SDP/Liberal Alliance, castigated as an old boys' network disguised as radicals: "*You say you're self-sufficient but you don't dig your own coal*." Lacking the use of his legs, Wyatt's drumming eschewed bass drum and tom-tom pulses and focused instead on the stuff at the top of the kit, so that his songs mooch around in a mollifying drizzle of cymbals and brushed snare. "A slinking record," was how its author perceptively described *Rottenhat* at the time.

Dondestan, rereleased in this Domino batch in its enhanced 1998 form, was the first to feature the extensive lyrical contributions of Wyatt's wife Alfreda Benge. She conveys the emptied-out, off-season holiday resort feel of their temporary Spanish home on "Costa (Memories Of Under-Development)" and "Sight Of The Wind". The melancholia counterpoints Wyatt's peevish pops at both the establishment (Robert Maxwell is namechecked) and the ragged British hard left. "CP Jeebies" images the Communist Party's splintered factions as a range of nursery activities. Beneath the tartness lurks a compassionate logic. Wyatt could see the present consumerist 'classless' neoliberalism coming, and the lies that would be told to establish it.

The 'grey skies thinking' continued after the couple moved to their present home near the Lincolnshire coast. Although recorded six years apart, *Shleep* (1997) and *Cuckooland* (2003), with their raft of collaborators and richer arrangements, form a perfect pair. Phil Manzanera, Brian Eno and Annie Whitehead are common to both, Paul Weller, Evan Parker and Philip Catherine turn up on *Shleep*, while Karen Mantler, David Gilmour, Gilad Atzmon and Jamie Johnson accompany him to *Cuckooland*. Less becalmed than the previous albums, the pedigree of musicians here assists Wyatt's songs in drifting free from harmonic anchors. *Shleep* allows its musicians the loosest rein with the material to produce some of the best music that's ever gone out under Wyatt's name, while *Cuckooland* occasionally sounds like some late 70s ECM album or even some of Joni Mitchell's work from the same period.

The *EPs* set is a valuable sweep of Wyatt's singles and disjecta. From the charting 1974 fundraiser "I'm A Believer" to Peel favourites "Shipbuilding" and the immaculate "Pigs (In There)", singles often found Wyatt at his pithiest. There's also his 20-minute electronic soundtrack to *The Animals Film*, Victor Schonfeld and Myriam Alaux's 1982 anti-animal cruelty movie, and four *Shleep* remixes. Long may he continue to slink.
Rob Young

Grey skies thinking: Robert Wyatt

John Walters

Avant Rock

Reviewed by David Keenan

Kemialliset Ystävät

Alden Baker
I Wish Too, To Be Absorbed
Important 2×CD
Double disc compilation of tracks from various long-gone and limited releases from the past decade featuring Aldan Baker of contemporary doom rockers Nadja. The set ranges from his earliest solo work through meterial that was featured on the soundtrack to a book of his poetry. Sonically it runs from glossy evocations of cinematic terror through Dark Ambient drones and the kind of guitar and loop work that pretty much defines the whole concept of 'incidental' music. Some of the more static sounding pieces have a kind of psychedelic depth to them but on the whole it feels a little too much like contemporary big-budget soundtrack music to make you ever want to listen to it at home. Something about the pristine, techy nature of the music makes me wonder if this is what long-haired teens get up to in their bedrooms now that loop pedals and recording software have taken the place of Joe Satriani videos and shred sessions. Which is another way of saying this is totally unhip.

Crystal Stilts
Alight Of Night
Slumberland Records LP
Fantastic new pop/rock moves from these Florida transplants, now resident in Brooklyn. Hypnotised by the primitive post-Velvets/pro-reverb sonnd of the best of the Flying Nun stable, the David Roback/Kendra Smith cebal and the more overtly psychedelic work of The Pastels and The Television Personalities (thunk *Up For A Bit/Mummy You re Not Watching Me*), Crystal Stilts have created one of the most perfectly formed reconciliations of classic rock swagger and zoned dreempop. They have the stand-up drums style of Mo Tucker and Bobby Gillespie totally down and the quality of the songwriting barely loses pace across both sides, with vocalist Brad Hargett combining moves swiped from Jim Reid of The Jesus And Mary Chain and Martin Phillips of The Chills. Indeed, this is one of the best garage pop sides since The Chills' own *Brave Words*.

Head Of Wentestiquet
Mortagne
Ecstat c Yod LP
Head Of Wantastiquet provides solo cover for Paul Labrecque of Sunburned Hand Of The Man, best loved for the key freefolk side he cut with his then partner Valerie Webb. *Trees, Chants & Hollers*. *Mortagne* feels like the true follow-np to that epochal side, with a series of settings for banjo and guitar accompanied by lucid renderings of field recordings. The banjo pieces have a weighty, devotionel feel that is closest to the early music readings of Sandy Bull while the guitar tracks combine a personel take on primitive, post-Fahey forms with phantom arcs of monolithic rock/drone moves. And despite the spare, stripped-back nature of the recording there s a sense of drama and majesty to Labrecque's instrumental conceptions that is genuinely compelling.

Jackie-O Motherfucker
The Blood Of Life
Fire CD/LP
New live album from Jackie-O, the first release to come out of their recent signing to UK indie label Fire Records. This is a recording taken from a live studio session at VPRO in Amsterdem end it's a fairly bleak affair. The opening "Valley Of Fire", taken from last year s album of the same neme, sounds frighteningly like a hillbilly U2 while the reworkings of earlier tracks "The Grave" and "Heyl Mr Sky" feel more like timid takes on the kind of downer Country of Will Oldham. The cover of the ballad "Lost Jimmy Walen" is even more pointless – does anyone really need a dull, indie-centric reading of yet another traditional folk chestnut? The press release claims that the final track, "The Blood Of Life", merks a new direction for the group but it s actually the only track on the album thet points back towards the malnlined jam style of their 'classic' incarnetion. As it is, *The Blood Of Life*, chesp kabbalistic sleeve and all, feels more like an improvised psych group regressing to the point of taking themselves for singer/songwriters. Sheesh.

Kemialliset Ystävät/Sunroof!
Split
Fat Cat 12"
LP length split 12" that pairs two hermetic underground cells, Finland's Kemialliset Ystävät and Matthew Bower s solo Sunroof! project. In concert Kemialliset Ystävät are a fully functioning group that work to harness the kind of monolithic jam logic previously exhibited by Scandinevians such as Internetional Harvester, but at heart they're the studio project of Jan Anderzen and as such their recordings are always far more interesting then their live shows. Here they contribute five tracks that move from intricate webs of vocals and electronice through almost Sketars-esque drone. Matthew Bower s many projects all seem to be converging on the same, infinitely dense point of late and the three Sunroof! tracks blur the line between the avant rock ferocity of Skullflower and the ecstatic electronics of Hototogisu to feirly devastating effect, with gnest appearances from Mick Flower of Vibracathedral Orchestra, Marc Orleans of Sunburned Hand Of The Man and Mattin of Billy Bao.

Mohal
One-Way Ticket To Candyland
Rune Grammofon CD/LP
New album from the Norwegian duo of Anders Hana of Noxagt end Morten J Olsen of Ultralyd. The form is based around ultra-dense wells of guitar, keyboard and drum machine pitted against rapid-fire drums. The loony tempo changes and precision attack kind of sounds like The Ruins but the duo s compromised flexibility means the whole thing leans more on the maths and less on the Prog, with the result that the Love Cry Want plays Ornette Colemen s *Dancing In Your Head* scenario that the pair seem to be hinting et remains sadly unrealised. But if you're into the idea of checking out two dudes playing in time really fast, there are drum circles in the local park that beat this shit hands down.

Noggin Big Band
Down The Kiahonie
Fleece CD
Noggin were the violin/guitar duo of Eric Ostrowski and Michael Griffen up until the untimely death of Griffen in 2007. Their music took off on the kind of high energy string work pioneered by free jazz groups like The Revolutionary Ensemble while detouring into the kind of hard-screbbling punk rock blare of Eugene Chadbourne. Noggin Big Band was e studio project that took place in Olympia, Washington in 1996-97 featuring a 12-piece group playing saxophones, trumpet, violin, trombone, electronics end drums. The playing is partly improvised and partly live conducted by Griffen and it runs the gamut of knotty low-level string confusion, lurching big band strategies and weird moments of ethno-fusion that could almost be Sun City Girls.

Tecumseh
Avalanche And Inundation
Important CD
Three long tracks of Drone Metal from this duel-bass North American trio who take classics of the form like Slayer s *South Of Heaven*, *Earth 2* end the first Melvins album and bury them in cotton wool. The result is equivalent to the sound of a well of Marshall stacks minus the impact, which is kind of like someone describing how something tastes as opposed to actually biting it yonrself. It all feels pretty pointless, with slow monochrome riffs generating drones of little textural interest over rudimentary 'distant'-sounding chord changes. It feels exactly like being trapped in e rehearsal room next door to e tedious Metal group. Nightmare scenario, is, I believe, the correct phrase.

Relph White
Navasota River Devil Squirrel
Mystre Records LP
White was a member of well-loved punk bluegrass outfit Bad Livers but his solo work is possessed of a much more lonesome spark, exaggerating the implied drone at the heart of the music of Dock Boggs end The Stanley Brothers. *Navasota River Devil Squirrel* was originally released as e CD-R in 2007, but this limited vinyl version comes courtesy of fellow musical loner Joshua Burkett s new imprint. White plays wooden six-string banjo, violin, eccordion and kalimba and his voice has a high, eene quality to it that allows it to blend with the various primitive strateg es that the music employs to reanimate trad-tional and original material alike. The use of kalimba situates aspects of the sound in some avant hillbilly fourth world, while the combination of dense metrices of string end White s transporting vocal is extremely psychedelic.

Ye Ho Whe 13
The Feather Of Wisdom
Pheen x LP
Live 2007 recording from one of a series of reunion shows played by Father Yod's communal acid rock group, who released a run of insanely collectable private press LPs based around mystical concepts extrapolated by Yod himself throughout the 1970s. There has been a recent flood of material documenting the previously obscure story of The Source Family, a book, a DVD, even reprints of Father Yod's philosophical pow-wows, but this is the first chence modern listeners have had to check out the actual musical legecy. While Ye Ho Whe 13 have lost some of the confused, cultic power of early sides like *Penetration* and *I'm Gonna Take You Home*, they can still gargle Hebrew letters like no one else, and the way this set moves from rhythmic mantras into slowly peaking acid guitar is pretty thrilling. The LP comes in hend silk-screened sleeves and is the debut release for Phoenix, e new No-Neck Blues Band-affiliated imprint. □

Critical Beats

Reviewed by **Joe Muggs**

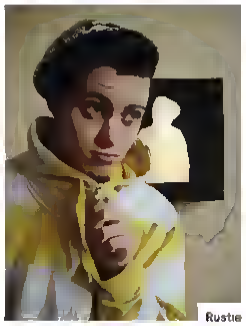
Roberto Auser
Flight 101 EP
Nature 12'
The title track of this EP is the result, via the Red Bull Music Academy of teaming Rotterdem nouveau-Italo producer Roberto Auser with 80s synthesizer pioneer and Compass Point Allstars staple Wally Badarou. It's a masterclass in the continuing potency of the space-age enphorie of basic analogue synthesis, even in a world of altogether more tronblesome and complex technology. Rather than the usual arpeggiations of Italo, its riffs are on single notes and steadily climb bar-by-bar with only kick, shaker and degraded claps as percussion: some wonderfully human stumbles at the end of phrases and obvious but effective swooshes to act as 'flight' motifs. It's by no means a headphone record, but demands to be played loud and in company for its large, basic gestures to work effectively. The B side "There's No Way Back" sounds like a cowbell-led live group trying to play DBX's "I'm Losing Control" from memory, and is thus wonderful: the slightly hysterical "Wind Of Change" is the most obviously retro of the three tracks, hinting at an alternative late 70s where Cluster were composing Japanese children's sci-fi TV themes.

Si Begg
Jetlag And Tinnitus Reworks Part 5
Noodles Download
A veteran of 'wonky Techno' Si Begg has since widened his scope to cover subgenres from two-step Garage and breaks to shoegazing and psych-pop. On his seemingly neverending *Jetlag And Tinnitus* series he has tended towards abstractions from current populist bassline-led, heavily-compressed electro House – and particularly Parisien electro House – styles. All of these eight remixes continue this latter trend, and are witty in their exaggerations and deconstructions of what can be a horrendously lazy genre, with particular emphasis on the "Windowlicker"– style fast edits that have become a stylistic tic for French producers following in the wake of Jackson, Mr Oizo and co. Best are DJ Primula's mix of "Are You A Bed Boy DJ", which shatters the beat entirely into skittering bursts of cymbal and toms over Acid spiurts, working either alone as a tense piece of headphone electronica, or for a DJ as a build towards a four-to-the-floor beat, and Hecq's heavier, more jagged, but equally broken take on the same track that suggests a kind of 'fidget dubstep'.

Chancha Via Circuito
Rodante EP
ZZK 12'
The inexorable opening up of Latin America's local musics to the ravenous attentions of global DJ culture continues apace with the building fame of young Pedro Canale from Buenos Aires, already a favourite of Optimo, DJ /rupture and Diplo. The lower and more flexible tempos of modern cumbia – compared to, say, reggaeton – give it a natural affinity with dub reggae and dubstep's echo spaces, all of which have developed along with loping dancehall syncopation. Buenos Aires's bohemian culture injects a melancholy that for the most part saves these tracks from being merely exotic chillout. Aside from the gleeful singsong rap of "Villa Diamante", there are five instrumentals here, a couple of them sitting in smooth triphop territory. But the best – like the heavily sprung "Selva Riddim", wherein processed shouts leap out as if from dark corners of a club, and "Zorzal", which feels like the hot breath of a vast beast – are stark and wholly original in their sequencing.

Com-Op 06
Various
Com Operated 12"
The Rumpus Room Vol 3
Various
Don't 12'
Exuding sweaty funk and derangement, rude wit and a fuck-you punk attitude, *The Com-Op* EP throws tinny 78 rpm record samples (Edit's "Regtime"), Bassline House wobble (Kenji Kinetic's two tracks) and a distorted Booty Bass sweer a-thon (a live track from Blackpool veteran Michael Forshaw) onto jacking Techno beats. On the same trip, the *The Rumpus Room Vol 3* EP has fizzing chords and nagging vocoder (Bjørn Svin), a disorienting Tom Lehrer-ish triplet-rhythm narration (label owner Jerome Hill) stebbing retro-electro notes (Ki-Yote) and, most successfully of all, a gruesomely growling 303 *"move that body"* vocal snatches and artfully-deployed backwards winds (Rob Stow). The title and Maurice Sendek/*Where The Wild Things Are* label motifs are appropriate – these are the kind of Techno tracks which invite wild rumpus to begin.

Hanno Hinkelbein/Tobias Schmidt
One Second/Drugly Funk/Where Are You?
Ugly Funk 12'
The Ugly Funk party organisation has been one of the key supporters of 'wonky Techno', the sound born in the mid-90s work of pre-Super_Collider Jamie Lidell and Cristian Vogel, Neil Landstrumm, Dave Tarrida, Tobias Schmidt, Subheed and others. Henno Hinkelbein – half of Aeox and mastering engineer at Berlin's Dnbplates & Mastering – excels at this sound, and "One Second" is a masterclass in the steady addition of tens on through horror movie voices, electronic alarms and violent snare patterns to channel fight-or-flight impulses into dancefloor mania. Tobias Schmidt, meanwhile, channels Throbbing Gristle into processed vocals and squelch over relentless Reese bass on "Where Are You?", and the sweaty heat of pre-Jungle rave into


Rustie

the pumped-up House riffs and Beltram bass whomp of "Drugly Funk". A reminder, should Minimal ennui ever set in, that the more pummelling, athletic strains of Techno are still vital and original.

Joker & Rustie
Play Doe/Tempered
Keps ze 12'
Never has the description that Glaswegian producer Rustie coined for his own productions – 'Aquacrunk' – rung so true as on these two tracks on Bristolian Joker's label. This is the first time British producers have so unerringly captured the neck snapping bounce, rubberised 808 kicks and sporadic hi-hat flurries of Southern US hiphop, but the hallucinatory surreality of the sounds squirming around the drums recalls the sub-aquatic currents of both Drexciya and Parliament, and the plaintive pitchbent riffs of early Wiley. The Joker/Rustie collaboration "Play Doe" is the most explicitly P-funk-laced, distilling the highest common factors in Bernie Worrell, Cybotron, Mr Collipark and Dr Dre, gradually bathing staccato Moog notes and drip-dropping bleeps in ecstatically fizzing chords. Rustie's "Tempered" looks more to Atlanta Snap music and Californien G-funk in its menacingly bare, simple beat and pure-tone melody line respectively, but renders the whole thing radically psychedelic, as background noises and offbeat square-wave synths lurch forward in the mix without breaking the flow. A huge and fertile landscape for the half-step beet in UK Bass music is now opened up for occupation.

Kweiden
Koichi/Mosaki
Highpoint Lowlife Download
With both Geiom and Appleblim exploring territories below 130 bpm, a new kind of dubstep House is looking increasingly promising, and it's that which Mat Ranson – usually known for glitch-hop as Fisk Industries – explores here. Both of these tracks evolve and unfold over almost 12 minute timescales, unlike many on the fringes of dubstep, though they don't simply rework Basic Channel tropes, but work with a sharper focused soundfield, making use of the sawing, jagged oscillator hum beloved of Skream and those who follow him. In "Koichi" it rises up steadily in triplet rhythm through snatches of dubbed-out chanted voices and ticking hi-hats, then falls away like a dream image. In "Mesaki" the buzzing is sharper, more electrical, and exactly follows the notes of a dub bassline through a more episodic development, with the dancehall syncopation enhanced by castanets and congas.

Ottosiderspunk
Pravda
Ghettofuck 12"
Since 2005 the Ukranian Ghettofuck label run by Valta and Minikin of Ottosiderepunk has simultaneously maintained a scuffed-up warehouse rave musical aesthetic and a bright-eyed party attitude. With this identity they have been able to make hard Techno, electro, dnbstep, breakcore and broken hiphop and dancehall sound not like separate genres but simply like rhythmic variants on the label sound. On this fourth and last of their *Feel The Beast* vinyl EP series, they encapsulate this ability. "Breastie Toys" jerks a Beastie Boys vocal sample around over harsh breakdence beats and chopped-up wobble-bass, with a top-end riff straight from darkside rave circa 1992, a little like The Bug's newer tracks with the focus moved from reggae to body-rocking electro. The rolling clatter of "Protection (Snrvival)" sounds like a more metallic take on Orts Jay's breakstep sound. Both are united by a distinctive sense of jagged edges, rusted metal and acrid smoke in the sound palette, but also by a ploeyful rhythmic core of irresistible funk that treats the post-industrial landscape like a ploeyground.

Zomby
Zomby EP
Hyperdub 2×12'
In which, alongside Kode 9 and LD's current House-oriented 12", Hyperdub shows that dnbstep's 140 bpm template is not so much expanding into other genres as absorbing them into itself wholesale. Zomby seems keen to take in every available adjecent genre, his genius is to retain an integrity of sound in the middle of all this. While it would be possible to seperete out es identifying factors e J Dilla judder here, a compressed Flying Lotus slither there (on the Prince-sampling "Diemonds & Pearls"), or even his labelmate Burial's lost soul miasma ("Test Me For A Reason"), what really unites and makes these seven tracks stand out is an intense body-trip synaesthesia, a crunch, squelch and – in the name of one track – "Gloop", that makes exploring them a thrilling but disquieting experience, like being surrounded by a teaming ecosystem which both stimulates and threatens to consume you. □

Dub

Reviewed by Steve Barker

Architektur
Travelogue
Burning Bowl CD
An uncomfortable mix of those smoove sounds that seem to be embedded in the wells of lifestyle lounges across the globe. Apparently the artist has played across the globe since 2000. I was expecting a more urban sound, and what better cities than Austin (where Architektur is based) and Vienna to create some atmospheres? But the 1940s swing band on "Misinformation" in the middle of a jiggly reggae tune and the collision of Meat Beat Manifesto and Shorty Rogers on "Speedball" are like a thumb in the eye. Perplexing and perhaps that's the point.

John Clarke/Bullwackie All-Stars/ Fabian Cooke
Pollution/Horns Version/I & I
Wackies 10"
Pressed up in New York by Wackies outside the Basic Channel reissue programme, this 10" plate – a tune from 1980's *Rootsy Reggae* – is a richly textured shuffling rhythm in the neo-Black Ark style adopted for the later output of Lloyd 'Bullwackie' Barnes's Bronx based label. Perversely, the version is reductively engineered dubwise with a clear 'ghost' from John Clarke's voice channel with maxed-up top end percussion while a lonely, strident trombone pumps life into the mix. On the flip is Fabian Cooke's sufferers' tune "I&I", again in Upsetter terrain for the rhythm but reverting to an earlier era, with less atmospherics happening in the dub.

Dub Gabriel
Anarchy & Alchemy
Destroy A/C CD
San Francisco based Dub Gabriel's most realised album so far: a move away from the explorations of 2005's *Boss Jihad* towards what has become a wider mainstream in the intervening years. No instrumentals here and not so much dubbing either, but the preoccupation with bass still dominates. Opening the set is JahDan (Blakkamoore), fresh from the *We Are Raiders* EP with Matt Shadetek and DJ /rupture, in upscale smooth bashment style on "Chasing The Paper". Karen Gibson Roc spits 'spoetics' on "Spirit Made Flesh" which to my ears utilises a direct and intelligent lift of a Scratch-produced female vocal scat from *Super Ape* days. That would be the highlight if it wasn't for the presence of Michael Stipe on a reverential reading of Suicide's "Cheree", with a string arrangement that evokes early Velvets dissonance. The centrepiece of the set, Judith Juilerstt's "La Vie Senvole", has minimally undulating electric keys straight out of a Martin Rev tutorial but with the nouveaux doo-wop styling replaced by a dolorously whispered tale in French. All these are enough for the memory of the weaker some might say 'iller, tracks to evaporate.

Clement Dodd aka Dub Specialist

Dub Specialist
Dub
Heartbeat CD/2×LP
Dub Specialist was the pseudonym for Studio One boss Clement Dodd when claiming credit as a dnb mixing engineer, though best guess is he sat back and called the shots while Sid Bucknor or Sylvan Morris laid hands on the desk. Most of the song sources for these dubs date back to the 60s, but were dusted off, remixed and reissued as dub sides on singles or album compilations in the 70s when dub had its shining hour. Whatever the history, this is foundation dub, versioned in excelsis by generations of dubsters. Originally released in 1995 under the title *17 Dub Shots From Studio One*, the refashioned track list substitutes "Still Version" for "Beam Sound" and adds "Dub Me Girl" (from Larry Marshall's "Mean Girl"), with the two disc vinyl edition adding extended versions to "Heptones Gonna Fight/Hail Don D" and "Crab Walking" (Jazzbo's DJ take on Horace Andy's evergreen rudeboy hymn "Skylerking"). Opening track "Starring Dub", from the beautiful "Stars" by Cornell Campbell & The Eternals, with its fluttering reverb is one of the most unusual dubs in the label's catalogue. The rest is a top grade mix of familiar and obscure rhythms in sparkling remastered form – essential.

Faya Horns
Faya Horns Meets Mad Professor And Joe Arwo
Makefresh CD
Faye Horns are Eric 'Rico' Geultier on saxophone and flute and Thomas Henning on trombone; together they provide the horn section for long-established Parisian outfit Faya Dub. Here Mad Professor selects an array of rhythms from his back catalogue, mainly from vocalist Alan Kingpin, sliding between one-drops, lovers, roots and raging steppers offering the players full access. Despite the accomplished playing, it's a stretch to maintain full attention over 14 instrumentals. There are echoes of tunes gone by here too: "African Warnor Dub" takes its melody from The Mighty Diamonds' "Bodyguard", but Eric Gaultier's breathy Roland Kirk-style scat-flute is its dominant feature, "King Moses Dub" is certainly "Yabby You Sound" versioned by sax legend Tommy McCook – a clear influence on these guys.

Jimmy Radway
Dub I
Pressure Sounds CD/LP
Many collectors regard Jimmy Radway's only album as dub's Holy Grail – only 300 were pressed before the demise of its distributor Micron. Fitting, then, that 30 years later Pressure Sounds deal with Micron's Pete Weston (see the label's last release, *Every Mouth Must Be Fed*) brings a serendipitous connect for this great set. The CD has five bonus tracks while the vinyl features the album as it originally stood, even down to the artwork. Ivan Lloyd 'Jimmy' Radway was a true reggae auteur: maintaining a fierce independence, his output was minimal with a quality equal to the best in roots. His friendship with Tommy McCook, who encouraged him to listen to John Coltrane, gave him a unique insight into arranging for brass sections and the signature sound of his Fe-Me-Time and Capricorn labels. Voiced by Errol Dunkley, "Black Cinderella", inspired by the black consciousness movement, was Radway's first single and a number one hit in Jamaica. Two versions consolidated Radway's emerging reputation. Augustus Pablo's "Cinderella In Black" and "The Best Big Yonth" – the young DJ's second single. The ten original tracks are among the toughest roots recorded, especially the versions to Desmond Young's dark "Warning". Mixed in classic gimmick-free style by Errol 'ET' Thompson – Joe Gibbs's engineer – this peerless set is now accessible to all.

RSD
Over It/Forward Youth
Tectonic 12"
Rob Smith, still missing in action from Smith & Mighty, swaps Keith Hudson goodtime samples for Big Youth's apocalyptic a cappella lifted from the toast of Burning Spear's "Marcus Garvey". "Over It"'s initial juddering, collapsing beats give way to a monotone bassline and scraping percussion with the haunting sound of a dubbed theremin running up and down the House speed rhythm. On the flip, the more orthodox "Forward Youth" has a reverbed vocal, dubbed-out synths and an unforgiving, dumb bassline all firing against a shifting wall of shattering breaks. Spurred on by the respectful younger pretenders of dubstep and nu dub, Smith is building up to the most prolific period of his career.

Scorn
Super Mantis Remixes
Combat 12"/Download
Striding multiple genres, colossus-like, Mick Harris remains largely unsung, maybe due to the sheer scope of his work: from Napalm Death to his more recent Dark Ambient/Techno and dub projects. Scorn mirrored the dark wave of drum 'n' bass: No U-Turn, etc, with a new post-industrial dub rejecting the dead end which was explored by so-called 'Intelligent' drum 'n' bass. This puts Harris in prime place as godfather of the more 'challenging' wing of dubstep. "Super Mantis" was around in its original form late last year, but the track receives a retread here from Elemental, attracted by the dark side of Harris's sound. The B side has a more cinematic Threnody mix contrasting icy swathes of synth with more sludgy bass stabs and crunchy percussion. Further mixes are promised from King Cannibal, Stormfield and Bracket, among others.

Seventh Sense featuring Steve Swann/ Gorgon Hi-Powa
Riddim Of Life/Shaka In Africa/Versions
Jah Works 12"
The Jah Works label was launched by DJ Rej Forte in the quiet English town of Newbury and its 40th release features ex-Dub Warrior Steve Swann on vocals for the stridently joyful "Riddim Of Life", plus brass from Hornsman Coyote and Afro-style percussion from Dub Simba. Jah Rej dubs it up on the version, but the flipside's the one to check here: "Shaka In Africa" a one-drop melodica dubstrumental from Gorgon Hi-Powa, is a tribute to sound system warrior king Jah Shaka, with a processional melody that could have been lifted from a stray Saiah Ragab Sun Ra tribute session, riding a prising bassline.

Thievery Corporation
Radio Retrofution
ESL CD
Although their influences are now broader and better integrated in the mix, Thievery Corporation's Rob Garza and Eric Hilton are not renowned as agents of musical change. Their fifth album marks relatively little shift since 1997's debut *Sounds From The Thievery Hi Fi*, though they can now afford to pull in such high profile guests as sitar virtuoso Anoushka Shankar on "Mandala", Femi Kuti on "Vampires", a tirade against colonial and post-colonial genocide in Africa, hip Brazilian vocalist Seu Jorge on the cooler "Here Krsna", and fellow Washington DC resident Chuck Brown – Godfather of Go-Go' – for the set's toughest track, "The Numbers Game". Though their hometown has long been the lennchpad for revolutionary sonics, from Trouble Funk to Minor Threat, Thievery Corporation promote social activism, and rail against suspension of habeas corpus, outsourced torture, illegal wars of aggression, economic crises, using the more easily digestible vehicle of dance-dub. They were first on the block with this particular subgenre and are still in front of a massive pack following in their wake. □

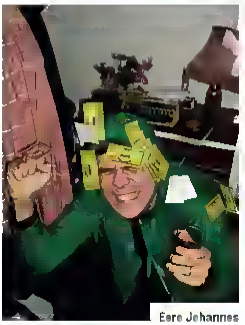
Electronica

Reviewed by Chris Sharp

Douglas Benford
In The Footsteps Of The Princess
12×50 CD-R
This is the sixth volume in the stealthily-expanding Carbon Series of limited-run CD-Rs on Alexander Wandt's 12×50 label, it offers an opportunity for Douglas Benford – more widely known as sl-cut db – to explore a murkier and altogether more impressionistic mode of expression. These p eces abandon overt rhythm altogether – instead, Benford turns his dub skills on a series of environmental recordings made around London, blending them with 'audio snapshots' taken on tour in Europe. The source material is tweaked and abraded so that only the grain of the sound remains. They do, though, attain a hazy, organic identity of their own – stretching out over more than ten minutes, a piece like "Relief" grows from the merest wisp of sound into a fully realised cloud-space, whose sudden, impulsive fluctuations somehow mimic the frenetic motion of the places that provided its DNA.

Gaiser
Blank Fade
Minus CD/LP
Jon Gaiser's Demascene moment came at the age of 14 when, venturing for the first time from his native Grand Rapids into Detroit, he found himself witnessing a Richie Hawtin DJ set. He has gone on to become one of Hawtin's most fervent disciples, first establishing links with the Plus 8 family and then going on to become a key figure in Minus's team of minimalist torchbearers. Gaiser's devotion to the purity of the club experience means that, despite a decade-long history of DJing, producing and releasing records, *Blank Fade* is his first album. The CD comes continuously mixed, and the vinyl version is a stripped-down selection of the most dancefloor-friendly cuts – but despite this narrow focus, *Blank Fade* is thoroughly convincing. The balance between spacious atmospherics and stern kick-drum propulsion is perfectly observed, with distant airhorns, spectral whispers and nameless cries snaking their way through the sumptuous, stentorian beats.

Headhuntar
Nomad
Tempa CD/LP
Dubstep has always been open to global influences. The cavernous space between its throbbing bottom end and its crisp percussion operates as a sonic Petri dish, offering a fertile habitat for whatever alien melodic strain floats in through the studio window. Headhunter's debut album is a different take on this open-minded spirit; every track was recorded in a different location as its peripatetic producer Antony Williams moved from South London to Slovakia, from Athens to Montréal, from Paris back to his native Bristol. So *Nomad* is well-named – but what is most striking is



Eero Johannes

not its diversity, but its coherence. Williams himself is a migrant from the tia- died world of psychedelic Trance, and here he distills the mannered euphoria of tribal rave music into something altogether more concentrated. On "Prototypes", there are congas twitching in the distance, and a 303 squirms its way into the heart of the mix – but everything is shackled to the militant thrust of the bassline, subjected to stern, subsonic discipline. The Technoid keyboard stabs and FX swooshes of the closing "Birk's Range" are launched constantly skywards, but it's the remorseless gravitational pull of the low frequencies that make *Nomad* a memorable experience.

Eero Johannes
Eero Johannes
Planet Mu CD
The first thing you learn about Eero Johannes is that he's a funk bassist who got kicked out of his group for playing too many solos. Needless to say, this isn't the most promising of introductions, but after ten years of messing around with computers and drum machines in his home studio, Johannes has found redemption in the shape of the rapidly developing trans-Scandinavian skweee scene. A couple of these tracks have had previous outings – "Finnrexin", for example, featured on Flogsta Dans hell's *Museum Of Future Sound* compilation – but they still sound fresh, deliberately-paced, direct and danceable. And despite focusing doggedly on the skweee formula of stripped-down dirty beats and naïve, one-finger keyboard melodies, Johannes manages to introduce a good deal of subtlety – melancholy chimes, oblique key changes and unobtrusive avant-garde touches combine to make this instrumental party music like the best R&B, it's far more articulate than it has any right to be.

Los Updates
First If You Pleosa
Cadenza CD
This high-gloss collection of spacious, sinuous grooves might refresh the odd jaded palate. It's the work of the veteran Chilean musician and beatmaker Jorge González, whose peripatetic career has included stints in politically conscious rock groups (Los Prisioneros) and experimental electronics projects (Gonzalo Martinez). Now resident in Mexico City, Gonzalez has teamed up with his wife Loreto Otero to head in yet another direction. Los Updatas combines the sleek perpetual motion of House music with an array of colourful touches – these eight immaculately-produced tracks open up to the sudden clatter of claves and timbales and shudder with artful vintage synth textures. The fly in the ointment – at least for some listeners – might be González's voice, a processed lounge-lizard croak which intones tales of improbable sexual encounters, complete with heavy breathing and some decidedly graphic language. But if you can tune in to – or out of – the soft-focus erotic langour that permeates *First If You Please*, it offers a satisfyingly quirky dose of parallel-world pop.

Alex Monk
Exchanging Chairs
Smerald ne Rima CD
Kit Mikaya
Smerald ne Rima CD
Two years' worth of pent-up material finds its way out into the world on these simultaneously released dual debut albums. Alex Monk is a London based musician/producer who uses laptop trickery and a concatenation of affects pedals to balance swathes of gaseous ambience against chiming, layered guitars. Hardly a revolutionary approach, you might think, but his music succeeds in making a genuine emotional impact. The high-built clouds of "Exchanging Chairs" and the psychedelic stasis of "What Thou Lovest Well" achieve a lofty grandeur, while the electronically-enhanced fingerpicking of "Neutrino" and "Death Without Tears" opens up a connection to the visionary beauty of guitarist James Blackshaw. A frail vocal rises like a broken reed through the frozen mist of "Winter Meccanica", it's a glacial, incantatory conclusion. The CDs are packaged in attractively screenprinted 7" sleeves – but it might be tricky to get hold of them as they're being made available in a limited edition of just 60 copies each.

Ontayso
Teotihuacan
U-Cover CD-R
Koen Lybaert must be the hardest working man in the nebulous electronica galaxy. He has produced music under a string of guises (Starfish Pool, Lilps, Lowground) and he runs the startlingly prolific U-Cover label. He's also, with Esther Santoyo, half of Ontayso – they released a 24-hour-long box set of music in 2007, but that epic project represents just a fraction of their total output. *Teotihuacan* is the latest instalment – a suite of four lengthy pieces inspired by one of Mexico's most celebrated archaeological sites. "Temple Of The Feathered Serpent" seems to happen in the distance, with every detail rendered hazy and remote, like William Basinski's distressed tape loops. It speaks sadly of entropy and bears witness to the ravages of time. "Avenue Of The Dead" allows percussion to enter, but it doesn't inject any urgency – the soft-focus pattering only reinforces the mood of elegiac aimlessness.

Papa November
Book One Azmoveth
Firstfold CD
As any devotee of Irdial's *The Comet Project* will have spotted, Papa November is the call sign of a celebrated German shortwave radio Numbers Station – and ever since he launched the project back in 1997, Stuart Tonge has woven mournful skeins of static into all of Papa November's music. But whereas previous releases mingled this white noise with the spooked tones of singer Katy Acquaye, *Book One Azmoveth* is an instrumental affair which Tonge describes as a "soundtrack to an imaginary dystopia". Clean, spidery guitars creep across hushed spaces, spare, synthetic percussion patterns fall like droplets in subterranean caverns, and there are surprises like the heavily-processed bodhran rhythms on "The Scroll" and the delicate lute patterns of "Locust". But while there's plenty of ingenuity on display, there's rarely any genuine excitement – the atmosphere is static, the dynamic range held primly in check, and the conclusion strangely muted. If *Book One Azmoveth* is supposed to evoke some lost biblical landscape, it remains shadowy and insubstantial to the end.

Zêbra
The Black And White Album
Symbol c Interaction CD
Another day, another pseudonym. Zêbra, it transpires, is yet another outlet for the maverick talents of Frans de Waard and Roel Meelkop. But despite a collective discography which must by now number in the low hundreds, the duo are still making music which is fresh, offbeat, disorientating and entertaining in equal measure. *The Black And White Album* moves with a surreal swagger. The artwork is a case in point: festooned with meaningless graphs, fake, faux-pidgin English factoids and delicious offhandedness, it's a glimpse of the slick, winning strangeness on offer within. Opener "Dream Music For Diamond Redheads" (sic) moves with confident, oblique logic, blending warpad, space-age ambience with a direct 4/4 pulse reminiscent of Lil' Louis's epochal "French Kiss", building to a genuinely exultant crescendo, than breaking down to a nagging Jazz Age coda. The funk strumming and looped vocals of "Dusty Riveval Music" (sic) are just as slyly subversive, like the rest of the album, they rehabilitate weary pop/dance manoeuvres with a stiff shot of Dutch strangeness. □

Hiphop

Reviewed by **Nick Sylvester**

Dr Doom

Beyoncé
Single Ladies (Put A Ring On It)
Columbia 12'

Scrappy mofo that it is, hiphop was built to weather depressions good better great. Beyonce's new track – in its own jump-rope rhyme sort of way – is hustler music. Every aspect of the song comes secondhand or straight pilfered. Producers The-Dream and Tricky Stewart swipe the heavy drops and doubletime claps from Beyoncé's own "Get Me Bodied", B's bubbly melody rarely changes mode, and to be sure, she walks down one note at a time from fifth to root for the chorus, third to root for the verse, of "Hot Cross Buns". Even the music video is a 'homage' to American dancer Gwen Verdon's three-chick empty-stage wiggle. For all the song's sass, you'd be hard pressed to say Beyoncé sounds anxious. As for her message – *"If you liked it then you should have put a ring on it"* – decide for yourself whether she is nostalgic for better times or just out of touch with her audience. Every non-single lady this writer knows might have to pawn her diamond for rent money.

Dr Doom
Dr Doom 2
Threshold CD/Download

This year Madlib tried to put together a full-on *Modvillainy* sequel, but MF Doom wasn't having it – so leave it to that other D-to-the-M, Kool Keith's Dr Doom, to do his own approximation. The follow-up to his 1999 Doom debut, *Dr Doom 2* has Keith playing violent horror villain over discordant, detective show psychedelia: crunchy guitars, horn stabs, thick piano funk. Dr Doom killed off Dr Octagon ten years ago, in case you forgot ("RIP Dr Octagon") but there are new enemies too: Simon Cowell and *American Idol* (*"I piss on the ratings with a scuba diving tonk with a German mask"*), corny white people (*"White people love me like Fergie, man"*), women who won't sleep with him after gigs (*"I'm the type of motherfucker to spray the bottles of Lysol on your butt"*), critics and downloaders who don't like *Dr Doom 2*. Keith's industry gripes are implicit from his two decade career as the Absurd Outsider Rapper – so it's a shame he feels the need to come so blunt. Same thing with the women-hurting: *"I followed you/I saw everything you did"* is clean but more terrifying then he likely realises.

Charles Hamilton
It's Charles Hamilton
No Label CD

The cover of this mixtape – the fourth in the 20 year old Midwesterner's proposed eight-tape run – takes *Illmatic* as its jump-off, but with young Nas's mug switched out for a baby Sonic The Hedgehog. Hamilton's version of a Dropout Beer. So not a gangsta rapper. And really, the thug myth hardly resonates with the new young rapper elite – Hamilton, Cool Kids, Proton, Spankrock, Kidz In The Hall, et al. Gangsta is a stifling industry construct, which might be why Hamilton prefers lush, sample-heavy beats and self-effacing, ephemeral rhymes. Hamilton's flow calls attention not to Hamilton but to his words, and how effortlessly they fit into the meter (imagine a less effeminate, less poetry slammish Common). And as a producer, he's pulling off some impossible sample choices, everything from radio alt rock (Hoobastank) to jazz-pop schmaltz (Luther Vandross), to yacht rock (Player's "Baby Come Back"). Granted Hamilton might grow too silly for his own good – he's more likely to rap about porn than his own sexual conquests – but no worries for now. His raps veer into deep end often hilarious existential meditations, comedy mounting with each new clarification, at one point Hamilton apologises to Lacey Duvalle, his favorite pornstar, for cheating, ie watching a different pornster.

MIA featuring Jay-Z
Boyz (Remix)
No Label Download

This was what we wanted, right? The underground female MC whom we billed a hiphop saviour four years ago, now in the very process of said salvation? Now attracting the attention of rap radio fans and bigtime artists alike with that "Paper Planes" song from last year? We told you so, and such? After 2007's *Kala*, MIA toured through 2008, got married, got pregnant, then retired from music – right when the public was warming up to her. "Boyz" was a mid-2007 single – technically an urumee melam/gaana/soca song, but with a bit of a Baltimore break feel courtesy of producer Switch – but gets a second wind with Jay-Z's blessing. It's difficult to take successful rappers seriously when they say they totally relate to this here global economic plight, but Jay's quick protest rally chant has unexpected staying power. *"American dream don't last through the night/American pie, can I get a slice?"* Unlike Young Jeezy (see below), Jay knows it's not about eating – it's about *eating*.

Murs
Murs For President
Warner Brothers CD/LP

Los Angeles's Murs, who had two solid indie hits in *3:16: The Ninth Chapter* and his Def Jnx debut *The End Of The Beginning* is running for President of Hiphop on a major label platform. One can only hope he was forced to recruit Will.I.Am, and didn't do so on his own accord. Will samples the Al Hirt "Green Hornet Theme" for a song called, not joking, "Lookin' Fly". A usually sherp MC, Murs sounds conflicted throughout, a little too anxious to be loved by everyone. Ain't nothing wrong in going for the lady vote – there's a string of four break-up songs at the end, one of which actually involves the line *"I got famous, I got it twisted"* – but you get the feeling he's playing Pinocchio for half of his Warner debut, though *"killing the beast from within"* is his euphemism. The beast/cat's really got his tongue though. To wit: *"A wise man told me, man, like life is like a table full of like glasses of water, and your job is to keep them all full. You know what I'm saying? So everybody's happy. But, at the same time, you got to keep your pitcher full of water so you can fill everybody else up. And it's like, damn!"* It really is like, damn.

Proton
Red & Purple Vol 1
No Label CD

As above, this writer thinks you're going to see a lot more talented rappers moving into the more maligned territory of what's called 'soft rap' – supposedly unserious party music. Not Ice Cube, but Vanilla Ice, not UGK, but B.B.D. Proton are an Atlanta based duo, compared lazily to OutKast because they don't do snap or crunk or dirty. They have a song here called "Magazine Dreams", a flip on "Microphone Fiend", over which the MCs trade verses about various beautiful black women and the things they'd like to do to them. "Wait A Minute" is a Baltimore anthem about waiting in line to get into the party, and as a bit of an inside joke, features a verse from New York downtown club promoter Roxy Cottontail, who's made a career of making people wait. The party is no longer a locus of hedonism, but a point of momentary escape – and no one has time for the solipsistic gangsta in the corner.

TI
Paper Trail
Grand Hustle/Atlantic CD/LP

Atlanta's TI hasn't had a hit since early 2005's "What You Know" and hasn't had his hand in one since Justin Timberlake's "My Love" later that year – and since both, he's spent time in jail and released a disappointing concept album. Not the best shakes. Though you'd be justified in hanging this writer for conflating person and persona, you're asked to contemplate the uneasy positivity that characterises *Paper Trail*'s three most popular songs: "Live Your Life", "Whatever You Like", and "Swagga Like Us". "Live Your Life" features Rihanna doing an interpolation of O-Zone's House hit "Dragostea Din Tei", also known as the Numa Numa song on YouTube. *"Stop looking at what you ain't got/And start being thankful for what you do got"*, TI offers, a manipulative mass opiate for people who got, in fact, nothing. In "Whatever You Like", TI sings (doesn't rap) how he can buy a woman whatever she likes. Well, that's just great. Then there's "Swagga Like Us", produced by Kanye West, which transforms a line from MIA's "Paper Planes" into a vain boast: *"No one on the corner has swagger like us."* Never mind that MIA was saying how dirt poor Third Worlders have more swagger than the likes of Kanye, Jay-Z, TI, et al. No dude, please, by all means: live your life.

Young Jeezy
The Recession
Def Jam CD/LP

Not to bring back the recession, but Young Jeezy is just so stoked about it. *"It's a recession/everybody broke/so I just come back/to give everybody hope."* This relief, of course, comes in the form of you buying the Atlanta drug rapper's *The Recession* LP and/or his "hope". This is why gangsta rap won't make it through next year. In albums past, Jeezy has asserted he both raps and sells drugs on behalf of the hood. *"The streets love Jeezy, and I love 'em back."* He might as well be a sub-prime mortgage lender. Jeezy may have the most charismetic voice in rap right now – a fierce but fine-gravel shout that hits your ears soft like a whisper – and his beat selection remains pitch-perfect – Drumme Boy and DJ Toomp's horn charts sound triumphant, inspired – but Jeezy still doesn't realise that selling drugs was good only for Jeezy. He's a cartoon, a pro forma thug, and when he tries to relate he fails miserably. *"I want a new Bentley, and my auntie need a kidney/And if I let her pass her children never will forgive me."* There's a reason the album's most popular song is called "Put On". □

Jazz & Improv

Reviewed by **Philip Clark**

Mostly Other People Do The Killing

Anthony Braxton
Quartet (Moscow) 2008
Leo CD

The Ghost Trance Music years were an exhilarating period but it's refreshing to hear Braxton now doing something else. This disc was recorded live in Moscow earlier this year with a typically peculiar quartet line-up. Braxton performs his usual range of saxophones and contrabass clarinet, Mary Halvorson is on guitar, Katherine Young on bassoon and Taylor Ho Bynum switches between piccolo and bass trumpets, cornet, flugelhorn and valve trombone. The balance sounds tipped ever so slightly more towards purist improvisation. Around the halfway mark the structure tumbles over and there's hard graft needed for its re-construction – a searching Bynum and Braxton duet maps out new space which Halvorson's manic strumming and Young's hyperactive bassoon move forward. Otherwise a unified ensemble identity is as impressive as it is implausible. Young's bassoon shadows Bynum's low register brass, while Halvorson and Braxton's sopranino form a shrill united front. A blink-and-miss-it encore neatly paraphrases the previous 70 minutes.

Jon Corbett/Rick Stephens/ Roger Turner
Dangerous Musics In 91
Loose Torque CD

Jon Corbett sat on this music for years. Quite literally – the 38 minute gig that makes up most of the release has been remastered from an old cassette tape that Corbett found jammed down the back of his sofa. Dangerous Musics performed alert, high-velocity improvised music that expressed itself with rude cartoon violence and stumbled along in agitated outbursts. Founded in 1987, the group eventually settled around Corbett (trumpet, valve trombone), Nick Stephens (bass) and Roger Turner (percussion). Corbett's lithe, malleable trumpet feels like it's perpetually trying to engineer an escape route from its high register, from where broken fanfares and disquieting screams tumble around Stephen's rapid-response bass and Turner's lawless drums. The disc begins with five professionally recorded etude-like improvisations from 1991, and moves to the 'lost' gig (exquisitely remastered) to which Corbett's agile flute adds exponentially. A forgotten part of our improv heritage.

Kenny Garrett
Sketches Of MD
Mack Avenue CD

Saxophonist Kenny Garrett has an unerring habit of delivering albums that are superior to his mainstream persona. This one has Pharoah Sanders joining Garrett in a double saxophone frontline; the MD of the title is Miles Davis – Garrett's onetime boss – but Sanders's presence ensures that this is more than just another by-rote Miles tribute project. The opener "The Ring" sits broadly in Coltrane model territory (with melodic contours strangely reminiscent of Monk's "Round Midnight") and Sanders works his solo towards out-of-body falsetto yelps that are beautifully controlled and float over the persistent tick-tock of the rhythm section. The title track ingeniously plays off a miscellany of Miles licks (keyboardist Benito Gonzalez has a sharp ear for authentic *Live-Evil* keyboard colours) and a well-observed evocation of Wayne Shorter follows. Not a record to change anything, but an enjoyable diversion.

Joëlle Léandre & Barre Phillipe
A L'Improviste
Kadima Collective CD

Joëlle Léandre & Akosh S
KOR
Leo CD

With fellow bassist Barre Phillips – deadpan banter in the last track excluded – French improvisor Joëlle Leandre plays interior and secret music, with Hungarian saxophonist Akosh S (the performance persona of Szelevenyi Ákos) she strikes with an exuberance and generosity of gesture that borders on the theatrical. In these two albums recorded during 2005, Phillips and Léandre are obviously of a single mind about the bass' material morphs between them, and rumbling tremolos, rarefied pizzicato and salamander-twisting melodic lines outline an inscrutable chamber music. Akosh S's jazz inflections probe another aspect of Leandre's personality. She isn't an instinctive jazzer, and S tries his damnedest to make her swing; she sort of goes there, but with a melodic arsenal that has little to do with the music.

Mostly Other People Do The Killing
This Is Our Moosic
Hot Cup CD

Moppa Elliott's so-called 'terrorist' bebop group Mostly Other People Do The Killing, featuring Peter Evans (trumpet), Jon Irabagon (tenor saxophone) and Kevin Shea (drums), deliver another kick in the nuts to jazz history. The album cover is an uncannily accurate mock-up of Ornette Coleman's 1960 *This Is Our Music* of which Elliott's title is a skit; he hails from the Pennsylvanian town of Moosic – and he puts the very notion of authenticity under the microscope. Too much contemporary jazz is suffocated by nicey-nice deference to the canon and responds with utilitarian virtuosity. But this music is aware of its place in history; is perceptive and witty, and probes the mannerisms and sub-structures of jazz forms we take for granted. "Two Boots Jecks" is triumphantly bogus Dixieland. Evans's New Orleans swagger and Irabagon's honks are underscored by a rhythm section that strides backwards and forwards across stylistic generations at a quaver's notice. Each piece takes a position vis-à-vis swing, blues, bop and funk, and Billy Joel's "Allentown" is co-opted as a hokum finale. Slick virtuosity and postmodern irony can be dangerous tools. Here's how to use them properly.

Wolfgang Muthspiel Quartet
Earth Mountain
Material CD

Wolfgang Muthspiel & Brian Blade
Friendly Travelers Live
Material CD+DVD

Question: how could a guitarist who has created such a liberated, thoughtful album as *Friendly Travelers* also produce the execrable *Earth Mountain*, both within a few months of each other? *Friendly Travelers* opens with Muthspiel musing on a textbook blues vamp that he transforms with trenchant harmonic alterations and an elusive sense of time. Drummer Brian Blade pushes towards double-time and the two men dance over the turnaround of chord changes. *Earth Mountain*, with its power rock anthems and melodic jingles is, in contrast, chanceless and emotionally manipulative. Is Muthspiel turning into the Austrian Pat Metheny, with *Song X* and *Bright Sized Life* sensibilities running in parallel?

Mario Pavone Double Tenor Quartet
Ancestors
Playscape CD

A mixed bag – bassist Mario Pavone's compositions can sound stiff and manufactured, but creative pearls are yielded during the process of improvisation. The ancestors cited in the title are Dewey Redman and Andrew Hill, both recently passed way, and Pavone bucks the over-reverential trend of albums with titles like *Back To Tradition* and *Footsteps Of Our Fathers*. Tony Malaby and Jimmy Greene are a virile two-tenor (and soprano) front line, while pianist Peter Madsen, a long serving Pavone sidemen, relishes tossing pulse wrecking googlies into the performance: check out "Iskmix" to hear him accompanying and then challenging the flow. The leader sets a heady momentum behind "Tomes" and primes "Iskmix" with harmonic gravitas.

Rehab
Mon Under Train Situation
+3dB CD

"Sudden death under a railway car seems to tie this album together, as the 11 titles constitute a journey between underground stations across the globe." I'm not certain what that statement means, either (especially as there are nine tracks), but the music's great. On paper, Rehab is a Norwegian duo featuring John Hegre (guitar) and Bjernar Habbestad (flute), but the reality of their work is somewhat different. Both men submit their instrumental playing to intense post-production in the studio that, after layering and mixing, renders Habbestad's flute largely unrecognisable and slides Hegre's guitar along a spectrum of heavy instrumental noise to industrial clatter. The album begins with a series of electronic crescendos, each speeding up and peaking at ear-splitting levels before jumping to a new harmonic centre. The album does embrace occasional moments of repose, but it's the relentless shifts in timbre and the continual defining of new extremes that keeps the music vivid and alive.

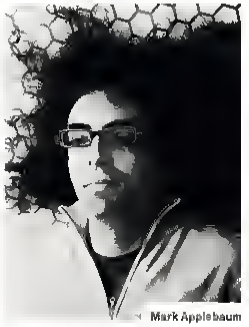
Zero Point
Plays Albert Ayler
Ayler CD

Luther Thomas/Jair-Rohm Parker Wells/Tony Bianco
Meditations On Albert Ayler
Ayler CD

Saxophonist Luther Thomas's trio, with bassist Jair-Rohm Parker Wells and drummer Tony Bianco, and the group Zero Point – German Bringes (alto and tenor saxophones), Itzam Cano (bass) and Gabriel Lauber (drums) – find radically different routes into Albert Ayler's psyche on these two Ayler Records discs. Thomas opens a door onto Ayler's monumentalism with a long remake of "Ghosts/Truth Is Marching In", anchored by Bianco's ecstatic mantras and Wells carpeting the music with high-energy activity. Zero Point, as their name perhaps implies, are interested in defining the essence of Ayler in short, rigorously conceived covers of his themes. Bringas sometimes comes perilously close to straight impersonation, but usually pulls something of his own out of the bag too. □

Modern Composition

Reviewed by Barry Witherden



Mark Applebaum

Mark Applebaum
Sock Monkey
Innova CD
Just the first 15 seconds of the opening track, *Magnetic North*, conjure up a confrontation between Mingus, Berg and Instant Composers Pool, while later on there is an explicit reference to John Zorn's game piece *Cobra* and echoes of mocking brass figures common in 'toons. In praising the performance of The Meridien Arts Ensemble, a five-brass, one-percussion outfit, Applebaum hopes that "playing (as children do)" will succeed "performing (a decidedly adult enterprise)". Certainly game-playing, irreverence and subversion are central to this music, yet there is an evident knowledge of, and proper respect for, giants of the past. *The Composer's Middle Period* for a brass/woodwind/string sextet was commissioned as a companion piece to Webern's *Concerto* op 24, while in *Variations On Variations On A Theme By Mozart* a prepared piano overdubbed 16 times plays the great man's "Twinkle Twinkle Little Star" clone straight; the preparations creating the variations. Highly recommended.

Morton Feldman/Maitaine Sebastian
Mery Ann's Theme/Mouvement De Neige
No label 3" CD-R
The performers here are the French ensemble 0 (zero), perhaps best known for their 2005 CD comprising five realisations of Cage's *4'33"*. Here they present two gentle, rather more conventional compositions. Feldman's piece, composed for the film *Something Wild In The City*, is unusually short (4'28") and eventful for him – though such things are relative: the eventfulness is primarily a matter of revoicing with instruments ranging from quiet toy organ to confident trombone. Sebastian's is similar in mood and methodology, but with short episodes of melodic expansion.

Clemens Gadenstatter
Songbook
Cel Legno CD
The title of the essay in the CD booklet "The Salvage Of Dead Things" seems to sum up Gadenstatter's current schtick. He attempts to reanimate the clichés of certain genres that have become moribund through over-use rather than neglect. The title of *Akkor(d/t)onz* for solo piano bears a number of possible interpretations, but the most obvious one is 'dance of chords' as Gadenstatter explodes familiar harmonies. In *Songbook # 0–11* for saxophone, percussion, piano and electronic modifications, his starting points are Romantic piano and "the archaic power of rock in its heyday". Well, I thought I spotted fragments of *The Flight Of The Bumblebee* and *Sabre Dance*.

Hafdi Hallgrimsson
Music For Solo Piano
Delphian CD
Although now Edinburgh based, Hallgrimsson is generally regarded as part of the recent surge in Icelandic New Music. All the tracks are premiere recordings made by the remarkable 25 year old pianist Simon Smith. He takes the many complex and fast passages in his stride, demonstrating admirable sensitivity and depth of feeling in the more reflective pieces. In *Fley*, Hallgrimsson presents Smith with revisions of early studies written for, respectively, right and left hand only, which most of us would have trouble negotiating with three hands. This music is not about empty virtuosity, though; like most of Hallgrimsson's instrumental writing it is well argued and focused, with a heart of cool and glittering beauty.

Hens Werner Henze
Musica Da Camera
Mode CD
Covering over 50 years, from the *Sonatina* for flute and piano (1947) to *Eines Kleines Potpourri* from the opera *Boulevard Solitude* (2000), this disc gives an excellent overview of Henze's smaller scale compositions. Henze is very much a theatrical composer, and has said "My music tends to the gestural, corporeal, visual. It is itself drama at the heart of life, and could not exist apart, or in a private or domestic dimension." There is certainly a physical solidity and sensuality to Henze's work, even for small ensembles or solo instruments, such as *Drei Tentos* for guitar (1958) and *Toccata Mistica* for piano (1994), robustly played here by Marco Cappelli and Ciro Longobardi respectively. Henze's career has been long, but he has never lapsed into a lazy persona, nor betrayed his own vision for the sake of fashionable acceptance. This CD is as good a general introduction as any.

Kingdom Shore
...and all the dogs to bark
Black Bough CD/LP
Maniacal music which sounds like it's improvised but is apparently fully scored for four violins, two violas and two cellos (I'll take their word for it), and played, according to the press release, by one Mark Molnar thanks to the miracle of overdubbing. Molnar's other projects include something called Seppuku, a small improv group called generator and Rakestar, currently dedicated to the music of Sun Ra: these elements and more collide, disintegrate and re-form in these four blistering tracks. The music of Molnar and Kingdom Shore is new to me, but I shall certainly seek out more. Stradivarius, Amati and the craftsmen of Cremona are probably spinning in their graves fast enough to cause a friction fire. The packaging is a work of art, though it's a bugger to get the disc back into. Never mind: you'll probably be happy to leave it in the player.

Los Angeles Electric 8
Ploys Shostokovich, Mendelssohn, Braddock, Siegel and Kohl
Nie label CD
Transcriptions for guitars of the "Prelude" from Mendelssohn's *Organ Sonata In F Major* and two movements of Shostakovich's *Octet* opus 11 may seem an odd idea, but they work surprisingly well. The other pieces were designed for guitars. Randall Kohl's *Bolineso* is a viscerally effective evocation of a Javanese gamelan, while the other Javanese-inspired piece, Nethaniel Braddock's *Ill Tempered Lancaran*, has nothing ill-tempered about it in either sense. Wayne Siegel's *Domino Figures* was originally conceived for ten to 100 guitars and builds a canon by each guitarist playing a short phrase then signalling the player to the left, who continues the process – somewhat like falling dominoes. The piece weaves a curtain of intricate sounds, creating unexpected overtones.

Einojuhani Rautavaara
Complete Works For Male Choir
Ondine 2×CD
Between them, Ondine, BIS and Naxos have done a splendid job of chronicling the Finnish composer's canon, and this latest volume in Ondine's cycle brings us up to 2006, with a revision of *Four Romances* from the opera *Rasputin*. The earliest pieces date from 1956, although the *Two Preludes Of T S Eliot* was revised in 1967. Surprisingly for a composer ultimately rooted in the Slavonic tradition, his scoring in most of the mixed-choir pieces here is light-textured, largely favouring the higher registers, and with The Talia Vocal Ensemble he has the benefit of a choir that includes a male soprano as well as the more expected deep bass. While I've never been as captivated by Rautavaara's choral music as his orchestral works, this is still a welcome collection by one of the most emotionally challenging of living composers.

Howard Skempton
The Cloths Of Heaven
Delphian CD
Although he has occasionally broken the surface of general public awareness, notably with the gorgeous *Lento* (1980), Skempton remains a secret that is too well kept. Even those who know something of his music tend to pigeonhole him as a specialist in miniatures, like his splendid cycle of piano pieces *Well, Well, Cornelius*, dedicated to his mentor Cornelius Cardew. This release focuses principally on pieces from the last ten to 12 years, mostly for choir (here performed by the excellent Exon Singers) but with some songs for solo singer and accompanist and a couple of organ solos. All the pieces are accessible and attractive, deceptively simple yet put together with unerring precision and full of rich textures. Skempton may have eschewed most of the experimentation of his early career, but there has been no sell-out: this is music that is as honest as it is beguiling.

Chris Speed/Chris Cheek/Stephane Furic Leibovici
Jugendstil
ESP CD
The artist formerly known as Stephane Furic, responsible for all the compositions here, could hardly hope for better interpreters of his scores or better collaborators in bringing them to life. He counsels "Be gentle with the sounds – they have a life of their own... I don't push them around." This is the self-effacement of an artist whose command of his resources is so complete that he doesn't need to wave his arms in the spotlight. Contributing subtle bass as well as deceptively simple and austere writing, his presence is, like oxygen or gravity, vital but, except on the 'jazzy' "Three Kinds Of Folks", often scarcely observed. In its quiet way this is a rather remarkable album, and I anticipate playing it many more times to discover further treasures.

Christian Wolff
Early Piano Pieces
hat[now]ART CD
Steffen Schleiermacher adeptly and compellingly tackles six of Wolff's works, from *For Prepared Piano* (1951) to *For Pianist* (1959). Among Wolff's preoccupations has been a search for ways of allowing performers flexibility and discretion during performance. He recently said that one of his aims has been "to stir up, through the production of the music, a sense of social conditions in which we live and of how these might be changed." Far more evident here, though, is the influence of (or reactions to) the academic compositional systems of Cage's followers such as David Tudor, for whom some of these pieces were written, and the contrasting European attitudes of the Darmstadt circle. Space and mathematics are crucial, but so are resonance and texture, and the quality of the recording, supervised by Christoph Franke, deserves to be acknowledged for the detail in which it captures every nuance of sound, especially in the pieces for prepared piano. □

Outer Limits

Reviewed by Keith Moliné

Arastoo & AEMAE
Ostrakon
Isoundscore LP
Two 11 minute pieces from this Bay Area duo. Fruity Phrygian mode improvisations from pianist Arastoo Derakhshan with spacey laptop embellishments from Brandon Nickell (aka AEMAE) comprise the title track. It's a pretty daring piece, pitting unashamedly Romantic piano against digital scrawl, but it works surprisingly well, despite Nickell's attractive but rather one-note approach. A more rigorous interrogation of the pianist's contribution might have paid more dividends – sometimes it's easier to achieve more satisfying synthesis by having elements work against each other, challenging rather than complementing. The good work is somewhat undercut on "Capo", Nickell is left alone for the first half, brewing a Dark Ambient-ish concoction which, while pleasing enough, doesn't allow the pianist an easy point of entry. Derakhshan resorts to plunking desperately at the mid-point with some disastrously mawkish sustained arpeggios that are less Debussy than Liberace.

Angst Hase Pfeffer Nase
Glistening Ion
Ultra Eczema LP
Imagine a mixture of The Incredible String Band, *Quick Stab* era Residents, the pastoral noise of Yellow Swans and the most outré overdub odysseys of Peter Hammill (*In Camera*, say). Hey, come back! Chris Cooper (Fat Worm Of Error, Caroliner) deserves your full attention, having spent nine years perfecting this seemingly unholy hybrid and the result, the side-long munchkins-in-space epic "Jeersnips" is trust me an utterly crazed delight. Only Volcano The Bear would have the barefaced cheek and Olympian stamina to pull off anything remotely comparable. After the winningly hobbled tango "Horseshoe Crabmobile", which proceeds along a similarly wayward trajectory, the last third of the album settles into some inventive Chocolate Monk-style crackle that balances control and abandon with rare skill.

Blanco Estira Nuestro (+), Nermena Nélice
Cylindre / Oeur (S+C)
Entr'acte/Absurd LP
With an enviably cool name like Socrates Martinis, quite why this Greek leptopper has decided to apply such a convoluted appellation to his latest project is baffling. Happily, all is forgiven when the needle hits the record. Both tracks make good use of found sounds (distant aircraft being a particular favourite of the composer) and material sourced from earlier releases under the equally confusing monikers Nixiix Nyilx and Helice Pied. What is startling about his work is its deftness and precision – it's frequently unclear where the location recordings end and the processed sounds begin. Martinis exploits the limitations of his recording equipment with great imagination, treating the sound of rasping wind on a microphone as if it's a heavily processed digital soundscape, or reimagining sudden pops, thuds and jolts to the mic casing as sort of real glitches that are in turn folded back into the processed sounds, until the joins are all but invisible.

Bernard Bonnier
Casse-Tête
Orst CD
French Canadian pop-concrète composer Bonnier was a close collaborator of Pierre Henry, and much of 1984's *Casse-Tête* indeed recalls his mentor's *Messe Pour Le Temps Présent*, but with an almost punk-funk sensibility rather than the groovy 60s stylings of Henry's album. Apart from Bonnier's amazing (and often hilarious) collaging and editing, plus some extreme sound processing that has lost none of its startlingly futuristic sheen, the rolling and tumbling drum patterns – which are also subject to some fairly rigorous sonic treatments – could have come off a Pop Group album. While there's a slightly negging sense that Bonnier's playing this for laughs, self-consciously mixing high-art strategies with inconsequential dance beats, there's simply too much delicious rhythmic confusion not to be seduced. Any lingering doubts that there is a talent ripe for rediscovery should be dispelled by the fantastic "Soldier Boy", 11 minutes of punishing attack on a single snippet of Elvis that sounds like a cross between John Oswald's plunderphonic mangling of Dolly Parton and This Heat's "24 Track Loop".

Disillusion
Eyes
Partially Sane CD-R
The Zero Map
Daydreaming Of Nothing
Partially Sane CD-R
Self-expression is evil, as a good friend of mine is fond of proclaiming, and it's likely that he and many others would consider these CD-Rs to serve as Exhibits A and B for the prosecution. The Brighton based Partially Sane label has put out over 30 records in the last few years, the majority of which one suspects are the work of label boss Karl Waugh. His Disillusion project alternates between cutesy outsider pop and noise excursions, of which the underwhelming *Eyes* is an example. Duchamp might have disagreed, but rushed, ill thought-out experiments like this don't suddenly accrue contextual depth by dint of being pressed onto disc. Happily, *Daydreaming Of Nothing* is much better, two edgy Ambient tracks cut into short segments for the listener (or random play function) to rearrange at will. While that speaks volumes about Waugh's attitude to the whole idea of structure, the sounds themselves are never less than engaging and often very lovely.

Jacob Kirkegaard

Ensemble Economique
At The Foot Of Nameless Roads
Digitalis CD
The solo project of Brian Pyle (Starving Weirdos) *At The Foot...* initially proceeds in much the same way as do his mystical parent group's backwoods avant drone epics. Dolorous foghorns, metallic scrapings and voodoo percussion abound, all fed through the trademark Weirdos reverb-on-stun. At the midpoint, however, Pyle cuts loose with some surprisingly energised excursions. "In A Weightless Night" and "Your Dream Was Mine" centre on searing waves of fuzz guitar, while "Everything Fragmented" is an incongruous machine-rhythm workout. The closing "Fire", which recasts certain instrumental elements to form a beautiful chorale, surely represents the best use of crackling flames on record since Godley & Creme's *Consequences*.

Jacob Kirkegaard
Labyrinthitis
Touch CD
Astonishing work by Danish sound artist Jacob Kirkegaard, who is renowned for capturing and relaying hidden audio phenomena in specific spaces, via an array of esoteric sonic devices. Here he turns his attention to the inner mechanisms of the human ear, exploring the way the cochlea produces tones of its own when stimulated by particular combinations of external frequencies – a kind of sympathetic resonance. Kirkegaard characterises the process as "active hearing", a gradually descending sequence of these "distortion product emissions" produced in the composer's own ear forms the basis of the piece. The listener's ear in turn produces its own tones. While it's quite a bizarre sensation not knowing which tones are 'yours' and which are 'his', the overall effect is really quite beautiful. Though *Labyrinthitis* is named after an otological disorder that can cause extreme disorientation, Kirkegaard insists that the album will cause the listener no harm. Which is more than can be said for say a Ting Tings record.

Jez Riley French
Packington Canal Head/Wonsford Canal And Watton Beck
Engraved Glass CD
Two pieces comprising untreated field recordings of Yorkshire waterways, recorded with the composer's self-built hydrophones. He insists that it's not the technical perfection of a location recording that he's after, but a sense of emotional interaction with the landscape. That's not to say that he's slapdash with his methods – both tracks have a fabulously evocative tactile quality that clearly demonstrates the composer's attention to and delight in the most minute details of sound. The result of such open-hearted diligence is a brief, captivating mini-CD beautifully packaged (Richard Skelton's work comes to mind), and which reminds us that listening is the most important part of composition.

Satori
Kanashibori
Dogma Chaos LP
OK, let's tick the items off the Dark Ambient checklist: expensive black and gold-embossed sleeve which appropriates Fusell's *The Nightmare*, track titles like "Nocturnal Fury" and "Unseen Force", the assertion that the music derives exclusively from "paranormal recordings or situations", the participation of Justin Mitchell, boss of Cold Spring Records, home of all things dark with-a-capital-D. (His cohort on Kanashibari is Pessary's Neil Chaney, considering the album's general air of Gothic menace, his first name might as well be Lon.) But by showing no compunction in tying themselves so rigidly to their genre, Satori allow us to focus on what's really important about their music: its unbelievably lush textures, created with obvious care and skill. This album is all about sensuousness – it's all but devoid of conceptual depth. Despite the duo's use of synth drones, disembodied voices and martial drums, there's really only one instrument here – reverb. Tons of the stuff. The choice? Sneer at it, or get lost in it. The latter's more fun.

Jos Steen
Electricity!!! Music For Tape And Turntable
Ultra Eczema LP
Bizarrely considering that wildly experimental no-fi Country blues is hardly an overcrowded field, Ignatz is not the only one at it. In fact, he's not the only one at it in Brussels. Jos Steen pushes his outsider instincts to the limit on *Electricity!!!*, whose 'blues' pieces make his younger compatriot sonnd like Robert Cray. Growling and slavering like the idiot son Howlin' Wolf's parents kept chained up in the attic, Steen duets with slowed-down dirt-encrusted 78s with terrifying bravado. The other, ultimately more compelling side to his work is on show on a series of miniature collage pieces that share the same restlessness and impish invention as maverick boffins such as Ron Geesin or Steve Beresford. □

Size Matters

Reviewed by Byron Coley

Area C

Area C
Darkens The Mind
Slow Tapes MC
The always great project of Providence, RI's Eric Carlson. Area C rises some guitar on the A side of this to set the tone, then provide a basis for riff-splice forgery. Warm as hell. The flip is a bit looser and colder, but most of these Slow Tapes are one-sided anyway, so I feel like it's all bonus listening.

At Jenny Richie/Plethora
Mickey Mouse Is Dead split
Basement Tapes MC
At Jenny Richie are based in Ballard, Washington and have a mysterious rep as to size of organisation, form of musical torture, etc. Plethora are (I think) from nearby Seattle, and their shape is none too obvious either. The sides of this are lovely, erupting pustules of an exotica that seems more rooted in The LAFMS than anything contemporary. Small bites, but good ones.

Blue Sabbath Black Cheer
No Escape
Static Caravan 7"
This Seattle harsh noise duo seem headed for the bright lights, but this record is a little less overbearing than some of their previous output. It pairs two thick pieces of reverbed, psych-amp-gush, managing to keep most of the skreek inside pretty tight parameters.

John R Carlson
Recollections
Parvoart 3" CD
German based pianist Carlson makes another very pretty disk of keyboard improvs, with Oliver Sonntag playing percussion on the first track. Carlson's instant compositions are a bit like Paul Bley in spots, but he resolves things a lot more than Bley ever bothered to do. Which may or may not be a good thing.

Cave
Butthosh/Machines & Muscles
Transmat 7"
Chicago outfit with a sound even more motor driven than Wooden Shjips'. More minimal than that, too. Reminds me at times of what I imagined Marty Rev's solo records would feel like. Not to infer it's solo or anything, but you get the idea.

Cheval Sombre
I Sleep (delta waves)/I Sleep (alpha waves)
Transmat 7"
I Found It Not So/Where Did Our Love Go
Static Caravan 7"
New Yorker Chris Porpora also did a lathe with Sonic Boom, but I guess someone in the office snagged that, so I'm SOL. Anyway, these two singles are quite snazzy in their own exceedingly low-key ways. The Transmat one (with some Boomly production help) promotes the stillness of Modern Love, with sure post-S3 footing. The Static Caravan one (with help by Dean Wareham and Britte Phillips of Luna) is a bit more explicit in what it longs to do. The A side reminds me of early Sam Beam (if he had let MV sit in on guitar).

City People Farmer's Music
Afternoon Tea
Black Petal 3" CD
New Zealand duo of Mark Sandgrove and Sam Hamilton. Vague acoustic plucking, whispering and rattling in a winning Jandekian mystery mode. The legacy of Electric Blood carries on.

Lawrence English/Jeph Jerman
Split
Compost And Height 3" CD
Brisbane based composer Lawrence English has a good minimal site-based piece here, recorded at the seashore, based on relative qualities of waves and sand. Very moist in spots, it moves between genteelity and soft crunk with grace. The piece by Jerman is built around sferics and other space transmissions, resulting in something very much like a night in the desert during which the fillings in your teeth vibrate like crazy.

Nigh Places
Vision's The First/Nemer
Upset The Rhythm 7"
Very pleasant debut by a Brooklyn dream-pop duo who mix their natural impulses with a sort of clattery lo-fi approach possessing a large rhythmic element. No beats exactly, but underwater timber shivers nonetheless.

Married In Berdichev
Married In Berdichev
Gilgonga 7"
A solo project by Denver, Colorado vocalist Brittany Gould, who has played live with Jandek and collaborated with Kevin Shields on the Caldera Lakes project. Built around some plonky loops, comprised of almost-vocals layered and smeared across each other, it's tempting to compare this to Zamph or Fursaxa, but Brittany's voice has a Boop-like quality that is not quite like anything else I've heard. A real smooth swindler, even as the noise levels rise.

Maya
Y
Discalcula 10"
I'm always partial to records that use the letter Y as a title or signifier, be they records by Albert Ayler, The Pop Group or, uh, Maya. Currently a resident of New York City, although born in the UK, Maya crafts an interesting version of post-hook pop music with a derkly floating voice (à la Kendra Smith) and minimal accompaniment from Joseph Budenholzer. Pretty nice smoke.

Roshi featuring Pars Radio
And Stors
Gee 10"
Debut release by a Welsh vocalist/pianist of Iranian descent, fronting a unit comprised of two cellos, drums and (light) electronics. As you might imagine, the music has some otherworldly qualities, although it feels firmly rooted inside the dream-pop tradition, with a vibe seeming to acknowledge the pleasures of Catherine Bush. The two tunes drawn from the Iranian folk tradition are particularly cool.

Scarcity Of Tanks
No Endowments
Total Life Society MC
This Cleveland combo, led by the poet/publisher Matt Wascovich, has sounded a little random to my ears previously. But this effort, recorded on tonr, featuring such guests as Weasel Walter and Andrew Kimek, is a very solid spoot of goodies. Some of it's freeform skronk, but other parts are great rolling CLE-word-spews in the Laughner/Kryss tradition, with instrumental moves jacked from Death Of Samantha and Rocket From The Tombs, then updated like crazy. Crazy.

Skeleton Warrior/Pharoah Faucett
Split
Roofless 7"
Two groups from the hitherto unnoted Sarasota, Flor da underground. SW's track is an instrumental of almost Proggy design, with defined suite sections and a murky quality that nearly recalls certain gruel by The Hampton Grease Band. PF, meanwhile, sound like some overloaded, drugged-up punkoid offshoot of Fuzzhead. Quite a brilliant effort.

Skitter
Demon + Sets (Swiss)
Skitter 3" CD
Skitter is the name Glasgow's Liam Stefani uses for solo projects. Here he's dicking around with recordings made by Gareth Langford. What they originally sounded like I can't say, but now they're very nice, buzzing swarms of metal bees, charging into the teeth of ratchet monsters looking for a good time. Rackety, but neither noisy nor harsh. A lovely slab of Old School experimentalism.

Snakes/1-800 Band
Split
Slow Gold Zebra 7"
A couple of presumed New York outfits who herk back to something out of time. Snakes move slowly, like some strange post-core combo aping The Faces on downs, fronted by someone who can't decide if the best vocal model is Terry Reid or Bullwinkle. 1-800 Band is like power pop, but slower, the instrumentation reminding me of Charlie Pickett's first group. Odd. But not ungood.

Songs To Wear Pants To/Rhythmplex Project
Music Geek
SFN 7"
Did an interview for this excellent radio show and they sent me a copy of their theme song, 45. Pretty funny. All good radio hosts should be so lucky.

Damo Suzuki with Metak Network/Damo Suzuki with Zu & X Iriondo
Split
Wallace 10"
Damo's mutable troupe, recorded in Milan wearing its own pants on side A, and someone else's on the flip. The side with Metak Network resembles a surging sea of metal washing over his vocals. The side with Zu (and guest Xabier Iriondo) is sparser instrumentally, allowing Damo's voice to be more blabbersome, birdly and adventure-oriented. But both pairings are as sweet as gingered honey.

Nicholas Szczepanik
A Stillness Rarely Seen
Small Doses 3" CD
Washington DC experimental composer Nicholas Szczepanik does a beautiful thing here. Long soft tones intertwine with each other while ghost content pokes its head through open spots, manifesting a fine and melancholy melodicism.

White Knives
Death Is The King Of The Dance Fear/I Saw The City When It Saw Me
Maptuco 7"
Archival find of 2003 material, recorded by a group featuring peeps from Swedish combos Skull Defekts and Cut City. Not much like most of the class of 03 I recall. This is Killing Joke big beat darkwave that will make even the most kohl-eyed slacker amongst us wiggle some serious sac. Eww.

Wrangler/Scanner
Two Systems
Static Caravan 7"
Analogue synth battle by a couple of UK bods who are addicted to those bloopy old machines and their well-rounded tones. Actually very winning at this length, but if I had to hear an album of it I'd come unglued. Reminds me of too many besotted nights at the Hampshire College Electronic Music Studio in the spring of 1975. □

The Inner Sleeve

Artwork selected this month by **Baron Mordant**

23 Skidoo
Tearing Up The Plans EP
Fetish/Pineapple 1982
Design by D Landin

The early 1980s had seen me make a sudden and unexpected move away from buying Slade ex-jukebox 7"s towards electronic music after randomly seeing Kraftwerk on the *Computer World* tour courtesy of my neighbours. From there I'd been fortunate that Godalming had seen a vinyl revolution at the Record Corner shop in Pound Lane due to Spot The Ball winner Ray Taylor. He'd lavished some of his winnings on a couple of Ducatis and a stake in the shop, which he had proceeded to fill with records by Whitehouse, The Pop Group and the like. Along with Portion Control, I had immediately taken to the blanched industrial funk of 23 Skidoo, and *Tearing Up The Plans* embodied my somewhat naive teenage grasp of that 'Industrial' climate perfectly. The sleeve just begged to be stared at, so I did, and still do – I'm staring at it now.

I still feel that, despite the brilliance of the music, 23 Skidoo are almost incidental to the sleeve photo itself, and that they could probably be found ritually thrashing around in the nearby reverb-drenched medicine cupboard at the end of the photo's corridor. It is also one of the last great 'laminates'.

During the same period my mother was working in a mental institution in Chartham, Kent, called St Augustine's, and wandering those dismal corridors for the first time became forever intertwined with the sleeve photo of my recent industrial acquisition. Even over and above the general aesthetic of the photo and layout, the sleeve has a rare sense of atmosphere that I can only still relate to via St Augustine's. Add to that the blinding incongruity of the tape cut-ups of the lead track "Just Like Everybody" and you have an instant Bayeux tapestry for mental health in the early 80s.

I'd witnessed a fair spectrum of behaviours at St Augustine's during my sporadic visits – from persistent fag cadging to hammer attacks – so later down the line I began to give the mystery 'fugueur' sitting on the bench in the photo the various personas of the patients I'd meet. Occasionally he'd get discharged. The fact that he is permanently suspended in the glare of that phosphorescent flare means that he could still be alive, and I've never bothered to ruin my teenage vision of this sleeve by finding out exactly who he is/was and where the corridor might have been. Roehampton? Budapest? Was it a sinister war relic? A film still? Am I missing something? I've preferred to leave the scene suspended for my own augmentation and not have it ruined by a pedantic historian. Daniel Landin, formerly of the group Last Few Days, is credited with 'design', but the photograph remains a mystery to me. Its composition and lighting are simply stunning, and today I can only liken its atmosphere to a still from a film by Andrei Tarkovsky or Béla Tarr. The image has accompanied me for over 25 years and, along with the sounds contained within the grooves, still manages to occasionally appear in nightmares. Most of the time the figure simply gets up, shuffles off and exits the scene in silence. Other times he'll look into the camera like some Lynchian cipher and proceed to piss himself laughing in pitched-up tones.

Circumstance and timing prevailed ominously in my introduction to this record. The music is haunting throughout, from the majestic tape collage of "Just Like Everybody" to what I assume is Fritz Catlin's low slung alley cat drumming on "Gregouka" and "Tearing Up The Plans (Pt 1)". Horns flail and recede in melancholic swathes and the production and overall sound seem aeons away from today's overly compressed false floor. The record is a room-size remnant of my days semi-squatting in Bridge Street, Godalming. It has adorned most walls I've been hemmed in by at one time or another and refuses to leave the box despite numerous economic distillations. I've wandered down its corridor a few times under the influence, wondering if there was a sheer drop to a *mise-en-Bosch* through that doorway down on the right. According to my mother, Hawkwind's Robert Calvert was admitted to St Augustine's a few times, and I've even seen him perched on the bench swapping gags with the lone figure. ☐ Baron Mordant is a member of Mordant Music, whose *24 Million Or Sell Neverland* is out now. mordantmusic.com

Print Run

New music books: devoured and dissected

Cooking up a storm outside Channel One studios from Beth Lesser's *Dancehall*

Dancehall: The Rise Of Jamaican Dancehall Culture
Beth Lesser
Soul Jazz Publishing PBK £19.95

As Beth Lesser points out right at the beginning of this vibrant book, "there has never been a time when reggae wasn't dancehall music". The sound systems have been the essential arteries of Jamaican music from the beginning: providing a subversive licentious alternative to the country's staid, state controlled broadcasters, offering crucial, accessible entertainment to Kingston's ghetto youth, and transmitting musical innovations across a rackety, rivalrous network of handbuilt loudspeakers and belt-drive turntables with astonishing efficiency. Duke Reid's Trojan sound system of the 1950s may be the most prominently remembered, but it was just one of a whole legion of yard parties which were proliferating even in that far-off, pre-independence era.

All of which explains why the first quarter of *Dancehall* is a potted history of Jamaican music up to the end of the 1970s. It's an understandable, even necessary, piece of scene setting, but others (notably Lloyd Bradley in *Bass Culture*) have covered this ground in more detail – and Beth Lesser has much more to offer as an eyewitness to the period that followed. Although based in Toronto, Lesser, a photographer and journalist, spent much of the 1980s on location in Jamaica, gathering images and information for the *Reggae Quarterly* magazine that she published during that decade with her husband Dave Kingston. Armed with only the vaguest of connections – as a friend of a friend of Augustus Pablo's wife – she managed to breeze right into the heart of Kingston's music scene. "It was really amazing how welcoming people were," she recalls. "Pretty quickly we were just like anybody else hanging out in the yard. It got to the point where in the course of one day we would sit in on a recording session at Jammy's, then go up to Studio One, and even Sugar Minott's Youth Promotion, all in one shot."

This sense of casual, easygoing intimacy is what makes *Dancehall* such a pleasure. Lesser's images cover a period – essentially 1980–89 – which gets less attention from the historians than the roots movement of the 70s, and which holds fewer commercial attractions than the ragga superstars (Shabba Ranks, Buju Banton) who followed afterwards. But classic dancehall offered a new generation of deejays a chance to respond to Jamaica's changing mood, with the easing of political tensions after the 1980 election came a revived sense of playfulness and daring. Their songs were a lithe, witty counterpoint to the high-flown sentiments of Rastafarian consciousness, and they struck a chord with an audience ready to trade their dreadlocks for jheri curls. The gleeful slackness of Yellowmen and General Echo, the sonlfniness of Barrington Levy and Freddie McGregor – both approaches were a response to a new appetite for entertainment without hangups. And the riddims, thanks to teams like Sly & Robbie and Steely & Clevie, were as compelling as ever.

The photographs which make up more than half of *Dancehall*'s content are a constant delight – saturated tropical colonrs and effortless cool ooze from every frame. And although there are portraits of every major figure – Eek-A-Mouse, resplendent in a red, gold and green waistcoat; King Jammy tweaking the EQ on his mixing board; Henry 'Junjo' Lawes astride a gleaming Honda 450 – it's the people on the mergins who really catch the attention. There's a great picture of a cook in a leather tam o'shanter brewing up rice and beans on a makeshift brazier outside Channel One studios, and a heart tugging shot of Prince Jazzbo's young son gazing, deadpan, at the lens, while his father checks out a dubplate in the background.

On the whole, the writing is less articulate than the images. There's some needless repetition – I counted three separate accounts of the genesis of Wayne Smith's epochal "Sleng Teng" – and a slightly stilted feel to some of the prose. But when it comes alive, *Dancehall* has an immediacy that few other books about reggae can match. Lesser's depiction of a typical dancehall session, at the heart of the book, catches the scent of Dragon Stout and collie weed with spellbinding authenticity. And when she turns aside from the mainstream of history to sketch out pen-portraits of some the scene's less familiar figures – Admiral Tibet say or Sister Nancy – she bequeaths a treasure trove of fragile, fascinating detail. Despite a frank engagement with some of dancehall's less appealing facets – the cocaine, the guns, the homophobia – the overall impression is one of joie de vivre and kaleidoscopic creativity. Few readers will resist the urge to track down as many of Lesser's "50 Essential Dancehall Records" as they can lay their hands on.

Chris Sharp

Playing for whales: David Rothenberg

Thousand Mile Song: Whale Music In A Sea Of Sound
David Rothenberg
Basic Books HBK+CD £15.99

'Inter-species improvisation' might sound as implausible and potentially as distasteful as Andy Kaufman's 'inter-gender wrestling', but this is exactly what David Rothenberg has attempted to do: taking his clarinet, hydrophones and playback system out to where the humpback whales sing and attempting to sing with them. A CD including some of the results is included with the book, which, in effect, constitutes an armature to the experiments.

It's hard to exaggerate now the impact made by the recordings of humpback song when they were first released in the 1960s. Paul Winter – who likened the classic humpback song to the music of Bach, Stravinsky and Ellington – Judy Collins and Pete Seeger, who wrote but never recorded "The World's Last", were all immediately taken by the beauty of whale song and the moral horror of systematically destroying fellow creative beings. The conservation movement acquired a fresh aesthetic impetus.

There are troubling dimensions to this, from the off. Is whale 'song' merely a metaphor for biologically determined urges: feeding, mating, territoriality? Disconcertingly, the answer is no. Despite substantial research, there has been no certain conclusion as to what function whale song might serve. The song of the humpback appears to be an exclusively solitary activity, which may serve no purpose other than performance, which is some kind of definition of art. On the question of 'classic' whale song, it's poignantly true that the repertoire seems to change every five years or so, never to be repeated. This means that somewhere in the deep ocean lie the bones of a Buddy Bolden whale, the pioneer of the modern repertoire, and somewhere in a thousand wiped Navy tapes may be lost some of the classics of the genre.

It was Roger and Katy Payne who established that whale song was fundamentally different from the 'songs' of other animals. It was longer, repeated without any break between songs, continually changed, and seemed to show rhyming endings to some phrases. These are unique characteristics in the animal kingdom as far as we know, but it is as well to be cautious. The enormous size and essential gentleness of the whales does provoke a certain sentimentality. In the course of his travels, Rothenberg meets New Agers who profess to be in telepathic communication with the whales. Such humility is classic bad faith: drive a species to the brink of extinction, then assert its essential superiority and place new-found respect between yourself and your guilt.

In order to establish the musical significance of whale song, Rothenberg discusses Alan Hovhaness's *And God Created The Great Whales*, which the composer later 'regretted' if not renounced and talks to George Crumb, whose *Vox Balenae* attempts to replicate some aspects of whale song as a trans-human music beyond our performative and instrumental range. To that degree, its appeal is pragmatic as well as sentimental. *Thousand Mile Song* – the title refers to the possibility that whales, using the vastly increased speed of sound through water, might be able to communicate over such distances, if our propellers and sonar didn't drown them out – is more than an extended liner note to his music, which includes a first ever recording of Seeger's song (the great man declined), but the proof of his argument somehow lies, or fails to, in the music rather than the text. There is evidence of interchange, of listening and responding, but it is impossible to be sure and probably undesirable to be prematurely convinced. For any quibbles about its chatty style and slightly self-serving conclusions, the value of this book is that it insists further research is needed and that it asks very profound questions, not so much about what whale song is as about why we elevate and fetishize art above all other human functions. For the moment, though, what Payne called the bel canto age of whale singing is gone, and we missed it.
Brian Morton

Game Sound: An Introduction To The History, Theory, And Practice Of Video Game Music And Sound Design
Karen Collins
MIT Press HBK £18.95

Karen Collins, a Canadian academic and sound researcher, has published the first book about sound in video gaming – from diode-lit bleeps and cursor bloops to orchestral swoops from synthesized strings. Collins begins *Game Sound* with a survey of the actual music and audio technology involved in a game's creation, then follows the making of a video game score from the game's blueprint through production and emergence on the market.

Collins introduces the Bagatelle, a Victor an bumper-billiards that became, in 1930s America, the model for the Ballyhoo, a pioneer pinball machine, equipped with 'bells and whistles'. Slot machines soon added sound, as did nickelodeons (that word, of course, was derived from the currency used to operate it); a nickel-odeon. Many of the earliest game sounds mimicked the sound of clinking coins). For Collins, the primitive technological limitations of those first machines were caused by the same thing that affected the earliest electronic video games of the 1960s and 70s – lack of space. Early games from Atari's *Pong* onwards had limited room on their boards for sound programming, and so had to content themselves with only a handful of pitches, volumes and timbres.

In the 1980s and 90s, Nintendo and Sega offered versions of the arcade experience for home use, competing with IBM PCs and assorted 'clones', with gaming system and personal computer copying each other's software and marketing models. It's worth remembering that the first computers were developed not for gaming but for business applications, which had little or no need for audio beyond error messages or prompts. 'Music boards', or soundcards, would be added onto personal computers almost exclusively for the entertainment of gamers.

After this history lesson, Collins's book gets technical. Her analysis of the problems posed to musical composition by gaming is not just specialist jargon, though, but provides an account of something that is affecting many areas of culture: the restrictions placed on art by the demands of interactivity. According to Collins, these restrictions (of melodic length and format) enable the gamer to experience a gameworld without distraction, as any game's musical score must be composed so that they flow unnoticeably from one parameter set to the next.

Collins demonstrates this with two-, three- and four-bar musical themes repeating in quasi-minimalist sequences: the sameness of their melodies and the variety of their sequencing creating that particular game sensation of simultaneous stability and change. Indeed, such experimentation with modular forms began with music, in the Indeterminacy and aleatoric processes of John Cage and Morton Feldman, following up on the atonal tinkerings of Henry Cowell and Charles Ives. I wish that Collins had acknowledged this tradition, and explained how, given a digital second life, it found itself transposed to the sonics of gaming – from the accelerant repetitions of the Russian folk music of *Tetris*, to the multiple pop and rap radio stations accessible on *Grand Theft Auto*. The FM ambience of *GTA* is very much an update of Ives's 'accidental' offstage ensembles, while the response of musical tempos to the speed of a gamer's play could be seen as an example of music written and played not for the public but for the "performer" alone.

Gaming, which is an incorporation of image and sound with an acting, choosing mind, reveals the essential aspect of ludus (pure play) that the philosopher Huizinga said suffuses every aspect of our cultural lives. The customisation of one's avatar in the *Warcraft* series, to cite one of the most recent multiplayer online games, begins an immersion in an alternate reality completed only by the game's music, which brings the experience of the game into the home through speakers. What begins with choice of race (Human, Gnome, Elf, Dwarf, Orc, etc), powers and weaponry, ends in a common environment suffused with common sound – ambient, but also susceptible to manipulation by player decision. Enjoyment of music in the past had to be just that – both immersive and interactive. It is hoped that this newest of interactivities might return an older sense of communication – or community – to the arts.
Joshua Cohan

Malachi Favors in *Les Stances A Sophie*

Les Stances À Sophie
Soul Jazz DVD

The re-emergence of *Les Stances À Sophie* (*Sophie's Ways*) on DVD is nothing short of amazing. When its production company went bankrupt, soon after its release in 1970, the film disappeared, leaving its director Moshe Mizrahi in despair. What kept the film in circulation, albeit as a rumour, was the soundtrack by The Art Ensemble Of Chicago – or to be precise, one composition, "Theme De Yoyo". I first heard it in London's Portobello Market, playing from a market stall. The driving bass and the gladiatorial theme stopped me in my tracks: when the theme disaggregated into a panicked melee, I turned and began to enquire about this track, only to be silenced by Fontella Bass's stentorian voice declaiming, "*Your hair is like a yoyo/Your neck is like a spring*"; surely this was the closest The AEC ever got to writing a Top 20 anthem.

In 2000, Soul Jazz reissued the entire soundtrack (and have just issued it again, see The Boomerang), which turned out to be a superb series of variations around an opening theme that evokes a restless, searching indecision. At the same time, Soul Jazz had located the last 35mm print of the film. In the time since, they have supervised its transfer to DVD. It is a labour of love that has paid off handsomely, Mizrahi's emphasis on sustained close-ups evokes a generation that prizes the value of self-questioning. AEC's music sets up a continuously modulating complexity of moods but they wrote, arranged and recorded the entire soundtrack without seeing a single frame, extrapolating entirely from themes and scenes suggested by the director.

Les Stances À Sophie centres around Celine, a free spirited dreamy woman, played by Bernadette Lafont, who marries Philippe, a bourgeois businessman: their partnership is doomed from the outset. Christiane Rochefort, author of the original 1963 novel, collaborated with Mizrahi on the script that's marked by a deliciously derisive attitude towards the propriety of the sexual division of labour in marriage.

Celine befriends Julia, wife of Philippe's best friend, and the women build a world of wishes, demands and aspirations away from their uncomprehending husbands. *Les Stances A Sophie* is an evocative portrait of a possibly lesbian friendship that prefigures Jacques Rivette's 1974 infuriating epic *Celine And Julie Go Booting*. The women explore different ways to disrupt their role as wives, in one scene they go clubbing with their husbands and a fat American client. As "Theme De Yoyo" strikes up, Celine, who is supposed to be flirting with the fat American, beg us to spar instead, jabbing him in the gut as they dance. She forces him off the dance floor, a curiously proud Philippe and the American watch as Celine proceeds to 'fight dance' with her husband's lecherous business buddy. It's a hilarious scene that adds a new resonance to the acerbic similes of Fontella Bass.

In another seemingly improvised scene, Joseph Jarman comes over to Celine and Philippe's sister and brother in a restaurant. In the background, you can see the rest of the AEC, seated at a table. Lester Bowie is packing, Malachi Favors is looking over to the action. Jarman picks up Celine's manuscript and reads the handwritten title, *The Sexual Lives Of The Natives*. "What is that?" he asks, uncertainly. "Natives." Celine replies. "Natives?" Jermen repeats uneasily. "Of Western Europe," Celine says, completing the title. Jermen is amused, perhaps relieved, certainly assuaged. "Oh, Europe? That's good, something ought to be done about that... because it's a drag. The Europeans... er... sexual thing... It's..." he trails off and gestures expansively, "completely..." he pauses to think of a suitable term, "... *out*."

Everyone laughs. It's a scene of multiple ironies, played with an ear for the potentials of embarrassment, attraction, awkwardness and alliance, a scene that performs the provocation of this welcome reissue.

Kodwo Eshun

Valerie And Her Week Of Wonders

Valerie And Her Week Of Wonders
Second Run DVD

The cult status of this Czech movie, with its eccentric soundtrack and lush, dream-theory visual sensibility, has been sustained by samizdat VHS tapes handed around among *Valerie* cultists. The film had a mid-90s video release, but its remastered appearance on DVD allows many of its admirers to see and hear it shorn of the glutinous fog of poor quality videotape for the first time.

It's a remarkable film. It's as if Jodorowsky has remade *The Wicker Man* with a script by Carl Jung. Less charitably, you could say it's as if Tim Burton had made an *Alice In Grimmland* with cinematography by David Hamilton, director of soft porn blockbuster *Bilitis*. The film was released in 1970, three years after the Soviet tanks had rolled into Prague and terminated the velveteen revolution of Alexander Dubcek. Based on Vítězslav Nezval's 1935 surrealist novel of the same name, the movie is directed by Jeromil Jires, a pioneer of the Czech New Wave.

Nothing in Jireš's previous films prepares us for the allegorical richness and visual effervescence of this tale of a 14 year old's journey into the duplicitous mysteries of adulthood. The film teems with scheming vampires, cloaked and masked figures, priapic clerics and deviant family members with multiple identities. Widely regarded as the last film of the Czech New Wave', *Valerie* was lucky to survive the Soviet censors. All films were vetted for anti-Party leanings, but it seems likely that Jireš's film was seen as harmless folk mythology and its satirical intent was missed. During Valerie's transition from child to adult, she is subjected to predatory attacks from authority figures – a clear metaphor for what was happening to Czechoslovakia at the time.

Despite the film's occasional resemblance to a 1970s hair-care advert, *Valerie* is a visual tour de force. The movie is a riot of Grand Guignol imagery mixed with poetic still life tableaux, and reveals a director capable of the most refined visual lyricism. Yet much of the film's cult status is due to its eccentric soundtrack. Composed by Luboš Fišer, another stalwart of radical Czech cinema, the music adds an astringent sonic counterpoint to the lavish visuals: every time the film threatens to engulf us in visual histrionics, Fiser's frail harpsichords, clangorous bells, tinkling music boxes and ghostly choirs introduce a note of counterbalance. And when he needs to, Fiser is not afraid to chuck in a thumping circus-band marching tune.

Never released commercially, the soundtrack appeared in 2006 on Andy Votel's Finders Keepers Records. The CD booklet has a eulogistic appraisal by Votel and a note of hymnal devotion from Broadcast's Trish Keenan – a longtime supporter of the film and its music (a track called "Valerie" can be found on Broadcast's 2000 album *Haha Sound*). In 2006 members of Espers, along with other musicians, formed The Valerie Project to perform original compositions in unison with the film.

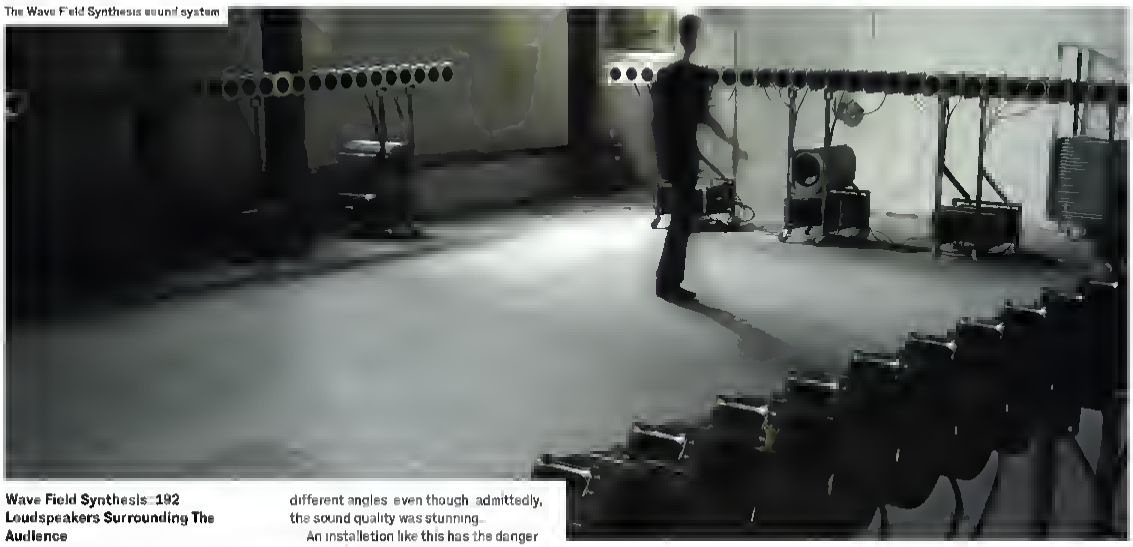
Valerie And Her Week Of Wonders is a cinematic marvel, visionary psychedelic hokum that ensnares eye and ear with a narcotic grip. It's not in the least surprising that it has such a devoted following.

Adrian Shaughnessy

On Site

Exhibitions, performance art, installations, etc

The Wave Field Synthesis sound system



Ravin Ganchrow

Wave Field Synthesis: 192 Loudspeakers Surrounding The Audience

Conservatorium, Amsterdam, The Netherlands

Edgard Varèse's mission was not to create music as a linear series of notes, but to create 'sound objects', like planets floating through space. The French composer experimented with spatial sound for his piece *Poème Electronique*, which premiered in 1958, seven years before his death. The Wave Field Synthesis (WFS) sound system achieves the physicality desired by Varèse. With 192 speakers, 12 subwoofers, 24 amplifiers and three computers, it creates 'holophonic sound'. The system is able to combine soundwaves in a way that allows precise positioning of sounds in a field of 10×10 metres.

WFS is different from stereo or surroundsound techniques, which operate on the principle of illusion: listeners have to stay within a relatively small area amid the speakers to enjoy the spatial effect. WFS is actually able to physically carry sounds, making it possible to approach them, walk around them and hear them move, like bugs flying through the air.

WFS was first realised two decades ago at the Technical University of Delft. Recently the Dutch foundation Geme Of Life created the first mobile WFS installation. Composers are regularly invited to create music for the system. Since the 2006 premiere of the 192 Londspeaker Experience, concerts were held at a dozen locations throughout The Netherlands and Belgium.

The great public interest in the concert at the Amsterdam conservatory during the Gaudeamus Music Week exposed a major problem: crammed into a 10×10 metre listening space, with 48 speakers lined up horizontally on each side, there was no room to move around and compare the sound from different angles, even though, admittedly, the sound quality was stunning.

An installation like this has the danger of becoming a spectacle, especially since similar systems are being developed for commercial exploitation in amusement parks. To avoid this, the composers invited for this concert focused on the artistic and conceptual side of the system by investigating the perception of sound in space.

Kees Tazelaar sat behind a laptop in one corner of the rectangular performance space. He started out with stationary musical parts, consisting of clear, electronically generated notes. Throughout the piece, the perts started to move around the listening space, interacting with each other and morphing into chords and sequences.

With abstract sounds you inevitably start to associate. The phase effects in Yutaka Makino's piece conjured up airports and highways, while *Reflective Surfaces* by Casper Schipper was like a database of Old School sci-fi movie effects. In contrast with the other pieces, which consisted mostly of electronically generated sounds, Ji Youn Kang opened with sampled percussion instruments. By simply moving the sounds around and speeding them up, the Korean composer changed their appearance; a drum roll transformed into a motorcycle and bells became a scraping pieces of metal.

The concert closed with a composition by Game Of Life founder Arthur Sauer, a combination of warbles, gurgles and vintage synthesizer chords. Sauer's piece showed what composers ought to do with the system in the future: experiment freely and playfully, because it will take some time to uncover its full potential.

Marinus de Kniter

Looking At Music

Museum of Modern Art, New York, USA

Zen austerity and the glittering promise of pop form the alternating currents that run through this exhibition, a modest survey of cross-media art dating mainly from the 1960s. The focus is New York, the representative figures are Yoko Ono and John Lennon. Ono's *Film No 5* (1968) dominates the entrance: a close shot of Lennon as Marian icon, with womanly rosy cheeks and glossy chestnut hair. His expression shifts in almost imperceptible increments over time – the image appears to hover just off the wall. How are we looking at music by looking at Lennon, via Ono? It's 1968, the year of "Hey Jude", visits to the Maharishi, and *Two Virgins*. Pop and experimentalism will cross wires in Lennon, in one of those rare but forceful charges that drives popular music forwards. But it is less as metaphor and more as materiality that music and visual art meet here: the filmic projection blurring and overspilling its bounderies just as sound moves through the air.

On the opposite wall, Nam June Paik and Otto Piene's *Untitled* (1968) undertakes a similar sensory task. A small, portable television set screens a diagonal slash of cathode ray that appears to faintly double itself when stared at; a dim hum, or the undertones of a single, fading chord. Encrusted with grey plastic pearls, it gives off an air both fabulous and slightly mournful: a forgotten handbag in a drag queen's closet. Piene's *Untitled (Smoke Drawing)* (1959), a polka-dot of soot that suggests an ethereal musical score, is the inverse of John Cage's *Music For Carillon #4: Page 3* (1961), an extract of a score that looks like a handful of dirt speckled onto the page. In the far corner, Laurie Anderson's *Self-Playing Violin* (1974) emits a continuous, elegiac loop and casts a tone of mourning over the whole room.

In the second room, extracts from Wallace Berman's *Semina* – first published in 1955 as a loose-leaf journal of art and Beat poetry – reinstate the repulsion/attraction poles that drew the American underground, in this case Californian, to pop. A glossy photomontage of AM/FM radios, each "broadcasts a different image" but the channel-hopping abundance is undercut by an Ideal T Romero poem: *"It offers nothing/ and promises everything."*

A handful of early music videos play on monitors: Bowie, Beefheart, The Residents. The latter's *The Third Reich 'N' Roll* (1975) is a pulp version of the rock-as-fascism thesis that has been taken up with grim seriousness by others; here, a group in a cramped cave, like a parody of The Beatles in Hamburg, being maliciously on tins while dressed in Klan robes. The one piece of Beatles – the film clip to "Penny Lane" – draws a small crowd of baby-boomer museum visitors around the monitor, as other exhibits are passed by. It's a salutary reminder that within mainstream discourse, the great flowering of popular music in the 1960s was long ago shorn of any experimental context. It will take more than this show to make a dent in the morbid cultural nostalgia for which what has already happened is better than what is to come.

Anwyn Crawford

On Location

Live and kicking: festivals, concerts, events in the flesh

Lucky Dragons

Oren Ambarchi

Open Frame

Powerhouse, Brisbane, Australia

Brisbane is Australia's third city, but many people – not from Sydney, perhaps – argue it's now the country's second, culturally and artistically. It's a magnificent city which has successfully followed the London template – on the Brisbane River opposite the central business district is its own stunningly-located South Bank, while upriver, close by downtown Fortitude Valley is a former power station now converted into the funky Powerhouse arts centre. Brisbane born Lawrence English comments that "in Australia, every artist has to be an entrepreneur", but he's more enterprising than most, and for the past several years has curated Open Frame in Brisbane. 2008's event was held over two nights, in the Powerhouse's excellent rooftop space.

English believes in concise artistic statements, and he asked for half-hour sets from the participants. The first night kicked off with guitar plus electronics by Antony Milton from New Zealand: his dronescapes morphing with high frequency effects. Kim Myhr from Norway was more leftfield, though that wasn't evident at first from the haunting, spare guitar which bookended his set. His little instruments – an egg whisk with motor attached, comb, metal bowl and plate, and what sounded like a toy dulcimer – produced a compelling pattern of tiny percussive or vaguely-pitched sounds, with echoes of Harry Partch. Myhr has recorded with Jim Denley among others, but brought no CDs with him – so, a true artist, but maybe he needs to develop more of that entrepreneur spirit. As on the second evening, the intermission featured a film by Makino Takashi with soundtrack by Jim O'Rourke.

Domenico Sciajno from Palermo is perhaps best known as a longtime Alvin Curran collaborator. His two audio-visual pieces involved his own Max/MSP/Jitter software where patches map a matrix of sonic parameters (frequency range, amplitude, envelopes) onto video parameters (luminance, chrominance, displacement, zoom) and vice versa. In the first piece, sound processed and drove the visuals, while in the second it was the other way around: light sources were captured in real time by a video camera which affected the sounds through a complex interference system. Machine gun bursts and chatterings contrasted with limpid, asymmetrically placed tones; the visuals were dazzling and iridescent. The second piece was more gestural: increasingly rhythmically complex and distended, but always cunningly organised by this innate structuralist.

The set by Melbourne's Oren Ambarchi on guitar and electronics was the climax of the first night. A slow, brooding exploration of low end sounds acquired an increasingly vocalised edge: the noise effects very precise and increasingly sharp. If by any chance you were dozing off, there was no chance of sleeping through this onslaught, and the visceral whine made me anxious about the permanence of my recent dental treatment. Ambarchi sculpted his sounds with a carefully calibrated rise in intensity, effecting a kind of harmony of noise: down to an almost tonic resolution at the end. This was a compelling display by a master of improvised sound art.

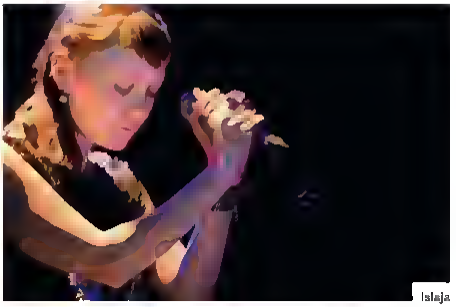
On the second night, following support from Spartak (Canberra) and Birchville Cat Motel (Lower Hutt, New Zealand – too loud for my ears by this stage) came Lucky Dragons, from Los Angeles. The multi-instrumental pair produced a beguiling audiovisual display. Beginning with sine-tone electronics and processed percussion, they created a Japanese temple-bell experience followed by Baroque flute duet. On screen, the visuals shifted to a pair of hands tremulously stroking plants and grass: which reminded me unnervingly of the silent classic *The Hands Of Orlac*, screened the previous day as part of Brisbane's South Bank German expressionism season, with skilful live accompaniment by Ben Thompson from Brisbane's The Rational Academy. (In this chronically weird film, a concert pianist whose hands are mangled in a train accident gets a transplant of those from a recently executed murderer with predictable results.) Hands were central to The Dragons' performance, with some audience members encouraged to join theirs together towards the end: in a performance within a performance. A wild dance featuring percussion concluded an exuberant and eclectic performance. Lucky Dragons' bright tonality and engaging gestural effects stood out in a genre where darkness and volume tend to dominate.

Open Frame concluded on a high with Japan's KK Null. Like many high-decibel noisicians, he's a gentle soul – on this visit he graced us with his expert knowledge of Australian wine, and interest in the sonic properties of the continent's indigenous mammals. His performance on Mini Korg synthesizer and vocoder began with a pulsing groove – or maybe it was a groove of pulsations. The performance developed into something more dynamic, gestural and dramatic than Ambarchi's – where the Australian was cool, almost detached, Null threw himself into the music, swaying and appearing almost entranced. The final piece began with science fiction space effects before unleashing a barrage of viscerally penetrating noise. By this time I had relented and put in the earplugs, but it was a stunning performance.

Andy Hamilton

Tom Hall (Lucky Dragons); Bryan Spencer (Ambarchi); Simon Fernandez

Dream Triangle


Islaja

Approximately Infinite Universe
ICA, London, UK
The New Weird America is, of course, no longer remotely new. And many of what seemed to be its boldest aesthetic strategies – a return to hands-on acoustic instrumentation and the very thing-ness of guitars, or using delay pedals to explore extended, interior sonic monologues – are, in the wrong hands, becoming formulaic. Po-faced fingerpickers and grey, muted droners seem to be everywhere. Meanwhile, Finnish psychedelia is undergoing a crisis of its own. Its boldest original practitioners, such as Kemialliset Ystävät, Es, Lau Nau and Islaja, have been followed by few outsider musicians of comparable quality. In both US and Finnish undergrounds, initial spurts of creative freedom have solidified somewhat.

The Approximately Infinite Universe tour, consisting of four collaborations between US and Finnish artists (many of the latter of whom are already well-established live presences in the UK), ferrying them round the country in a big tour bus and utilising institutional set-ups like London's ICA, in some ways sounds like the kind of cosy project that might suggest the wider impulses of the US and Finnish underground have finally dried up. That the results were generally very strong was a testament to the quality of the musicians involved and some sympathetic ears on the part of the curators.

The ICA is the kind of venue which, precisely because it strives to give artists the perfect space for their work, with spacious, flexible stages, quality equipment and no extraneous distractions, actually ends up feeling rather inert for the spectator. The bar area where you enter is a pristine, minimalist white; the performance space a contrastingly dark, black-curtained hall, and the shoulder height stage takes up the entire back of the room. Not only is there a strong psychological barrier between performer and spectator, more seriously, there's no chance of seeing what the hell they're doing with all those effects pedals. The ambience isn't quite right.

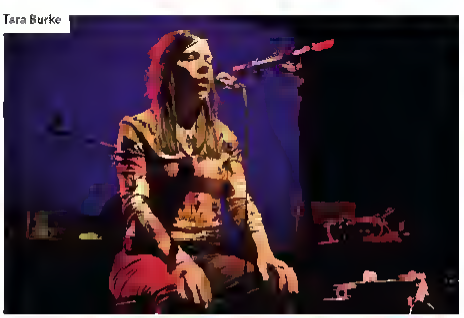
The problem is exemplified when Kemialliset Ystävät and Axolotl, the latter playing violin and electronic percussion, begin the first set. The Finnish group is essentially Jan Anderzén's project, but he's on his knees fiddling with effects pedals and completely invisible except from the first couple of rows. The collaboration is slightly stilted, as the need for a regular element to work around means the players gravitate towards motorik pulses driven along by chunky, freeform guitar riffs. For most post-rock ensembles it would be high quality stuff, but for these guys it feels the music has been artificially flattened into an endless horizon. At first Axolotl's violin and percussion sit slightly awkwardly, but this weird sense of disconnection gives the performance its necessary sense of danger. By the end, the main Kemialliset Ystävät guitarist has ditched his Les Paul in favour of a handheld device – possibly a delay pedal, more likely a cheap waveform generator – and is rocking on his chair, delivering jolts of sound with each tense twitch of his hands.

A duo collaboration between Es and Fursaxa was what was written on the bill, but as Sami from Es announces in his chatty introduction, tonight they perform as Sami Sänpakkilä and Tara Burke. If this exacting billing sounds a little pompous, the music is precious in a more positive sense – fleeting, soulful and warm. Sänpäkkilä, standing dramatically on stage as if he's about to deliver a Shakespearean monologue, begins vocalising in a tense, low register, using delay pedals to thicken his vocals. Tara Burke's vocals are more resonant, a natural extension of her calm presence sitting on stage. All that's added are occasional touches of hand percussion and slight wormholes punched into the accumulated drone, probably by changing the delay time on an echo pedal. These weird temporal slippages are the first moment in the evening where the sterile surroundings start to slip away.

Jan Anderzén's appearance with The Skaters as Dream Triangle is even more time-warping. The three performers are all crouched low on stage and slowly build up an opaque hum with sound sources and delay pedals. It's an incredibly familiar scenario and I'm almost ready to dismiss it, until after 15 minutes, the primal, featurelessness of the sound seems to be knocking directly on the door of the subconscious. Dense and looming, there's not much material for your higher senses to process, it just hangs like an alien presence in the room.

Islaja's set with Blevin Blectum on laptop and Samara Lubelski on guitar is the only collaboration of the night that falls entirely flat. A black-clad Islaja sings and plays keyboards, and the songs are mostly hers, but against the propulsive beats her throaty hollering loses the vividly aware solitariness of 2007's *Yyy*, which suggested a kind of beatless Nordic take on Bowie's *Low*. Blectum's electronica can be thrillingly bright and playful when left to its own devices, but accompanying Islaja, it is maddeningly repetitive, while Samara Lubelski's only option is to strum quietly away on guitar.

Of the films screened in between sets, a film by Sänpäkkilä of Kemialliset Ystävät playing in a home studio provides an insight one doesn't get from trying to peer onto the stage tonight. Guitars, toy keyboards and hand percussion are all blended together on the fly through a small mixing desk, creating the group's highly distinctive audio perspective, where conventional notions of loud and quiet become completely skewed. The use of toy instruments in the Finnish underground has never been merely an attempt to regain a lost childhood, but to work with them seriously as an adult artist. It's this kind of sonic flexibility that gives these lo-fi, mobile projects the ability to shapeshift and enter the kind of effective collaborations seen tonight. If nothing else, it proves how serious a business music is for these performers, and suggests it's time for other projects in the US and Finland to step up to the plate. The setting and the bill might have felt restrictive, but after an initial struggle there were indeed some approximations of the infinite tonight.
Derek Walmsley

Tara Burke


Sami Sänpäkkilä

Juana Molina

Juana Molina
St Luke's, London, UK
It's hard to concentrate through Max Tundra's short, sharp set: as there's a drum kit and bass guitar on stage that he doesn't seem to be using himself. This can only mean one thing: Juana Molina has expanded her line-up. She has, it transpires. The question is whether it has added anything to her sound.

Certainly her new album *Un Dia* has seen her draw back from the amorphous, multi-coloured psychedelia of her masterpiece *2007's Son*, into a cleaner, brassier sound. Fewer languorous detours, less bubbling and pitchbending, fewer crackles and glitches.

Tonight is the group's debut as a three-piece, and perhaps it is first night nerves that make the performance tentative and a little staid. It will be interesting to see how a group set-up, and the incorporation of percussion and fretless bass, work over the long haul, but at least in terms of tonight's performance, the problem is twofold.

The inclusion of other musicians may have taken some of the pressure off Molina to produce all the sounds on her own, via a complex and frequently malfunctioning set of keyboards, pedals, effects and guitar, but this was always a vital element in the pleasure of seeing her live. The perilous nature of her previous performances forged a kind of immediate nervous sympathy between Molina and the audience, which she often capitalised on with snatches of humour and self-deprecating asides. With some of this focus diffused onto the group, there's a slackening of tension and engagement, and no amount of shy smiles or asides between them can compensate for the loss of the direct audience-performer relationship.

Not only this, but the additional musicians seem to have flattened the sound out, levelling off the peaks of tonal colour and looped scat singing that sent her songs off into another dimension. By incorporating real instruments and visible musicians, the sound has been subjected to a reductive naturalising process. The magical sense of a dense stew of rhythm and voice being spun up from out of nowhere is lost.

The first three songs, all drawn from the new album, feel rather muted. The fact that the gig is taking place in a church doesn't help the atmosphere, which is quietly reverent, bordering on soporific, dampening Molina's customary frantic irreverence. When the bassist and percussionist do leave the stage for her to perform "Salvese Quien Pueda", the sound is still thin, and the song, often the extended highlight of her sets, feels truncated and flat. The irony is that in expanding her line-up, Molina may have diminished much of what made her great.
Carl Neville

Wolfgang Voigt presents GAS
Schauspiel Central Theatre, Leipzig, Germany
More than a decade on from the launch of Kompakt boss Wolfgang Voigt's Ambient electronic project GAS, a glowing patina of timelessness has settled on the productions, and it seems appropriate that the premiere live performance should be in a grand old theatre. There's an element of moroseness to the project, a morbid digging into the past, and weighed down with a tapestry of Wagner and Bruckner samples, it lurches toward heuntology on a new level: a luscious, gratuitous wallowing in mothballed romanticism, macabre and brooding.

But Voigt's recent flurry of activity belies the dark tendencies – the resurrection of his Profan label after an extended hiatus, the reissue of the four long out of print GAS albums, and the publication of a luscious book and CD of previously unreleased material on Rester-Noton add another dimension: renewal, return, the spring after a long hibernation.

For the Leipzig premiere, Voigt enlisted the talents of video artist and designer Petra Hollenbach to develop an audiovisual show that, in line with the book, emphasised the rich and sensual visual aspects of the project. The carefully chosen setting, the velvet seated Schauspiel Central Theatre in Leipzig in former East Germany, brought a note of opulence. Dating from the 1950s, its mix of 19th century classicism and 20th century modernism added drama: the sombre weight of 'seated performance' hanging in the hushed theatre at eight o'clock when Voigt opened with a low rumble of static that rolled around the dark theatre. The heavy curtains parted and we were launched, weightless, into a deep blue forest.

The empty darkness and the huge scale of the forest projection, at once kitsch and sombre, dwarfed Voigt, positioned at the rear of the stage behind his laptop. The familiar pieces sounded more immersive, with crisp upper register details and crackles, but with gritty bass. Heavy *Zauberberg* organ tones and nightmarish red tree silhouettes dropped away after close to an hour as the clear horns of *Königsforst*'s fifth track pierced the darkness and a kaleidoscope of growing plants appeared as though under a microscope. New life, revelation, shrinking to pinpoint stars as the track faded and a sheer curtain fell. Projected through the curtain onto the back wall, the forest became 3D, the visuals increasingly Lynchean and psychedelic, following indistinct bass pulses. Towards the end, we arrived at the rave to the exultant strains of "Pop 01", with flickering strobe flashes and video effects that echoed the colour splashes of the first GAS cover. The performance drew to a close with the fading beats of "Pop 07" and crimson-drenched forest scenery, "GAS" appearing in red letters across the darkness. Voigt, the maestro, in a three-piece velvet suit, bowed to a standing ovation.
Janet Leyton-Grant

Trevor Watts & Peter Knight
Purcell Room, London, UK
"Anyone know this combination?" asked violinist Peter Knight – a pint of beer in one hand and a bottle of cough mixture in the other – as he took to the stage for the second half of his Purcell Room concert with saxophonist Trevor Watts. The folk club banter and the gloss of ale clashed with the formality of the South Bank venue, but it said something about the duo's approach to making music. Both men have played to much larger audiences than the 150 or so attending this gig – Knight as fiddler with folk-rock stalwarts Steeleye Span, Watts at various festivals around the world. But there's a personal quality to the music they play together that's involving and intimate, an experience to be shared rather than simply witnessed.

Knight and Watts are in touch with a wide world of music. Their opening improvisation was built around a repeated figure plucked on the violin strings. It had a distinctly West African feel and the vibrant tone and flow of Watts's alto made that impression still more distinct. Later pieces alluded to Indian, Celtic, Indonesian and Middle Eastern musical practices, as well as to post-bebop jazz and rock. But these multiple rhythmic, melodic and harmonic points of reference have been internalised to a point where they are integral to the improvisatory language that these two fine musicians continue to evolve in dialogue. Their broad musical scope forms a perspective on playing rather than a bag of tricks.

Watts's credentials as an improvisor are firmly established, but Knight is a revelation in this partnership. His deft and intricate pizzicato patterning, harmonically adventurous bowing and occasional use of an electric violin for other timbres provided imaginative settings and a rich creative foil for Watts's lyrical alto and soprano lines. The coupling of violin and sax is a bold one, a highwire act requiring adaptability and a well-balanced sense of give and take. There's no room for either player to cruise. Watts occasionally moved from horn to hand drum, but these interludes seemed incidental to the real drama.

Each piece they played grew from a firm melodic base or rhythmic idea. In the course of nearly two hours there were occasional passages that drifted, mild miscalculations and moments of fraying – that's all part of an improvised music. Far more often there were inspired exchanges, passages of agile intertwining and the unpredictable magic of music that can carry you outside of yourself. During the second half the duo galvanised the weary folk song "Shenendoah", using it as Albert Ayler used his own simple themes, finding new accents, unexpected coloration and texture, so that potentially banal material crackled with life and tension. The crisp acoustics of the Purcell Room served them well throughout. Unpretentious and unconstrained by stylistic prejudice, Watts and Knight form a singular combination and in the course of this performance they showed how potent that can be.
Julian Cowley

Simon Fernandez (Molina); Vivienne Robertson

The rot sets in Ross Bolleter

Ross Bolleter
Ruined Piano Concert
Wambyn Olive Farm York Australia

"The only unchanging law is the law of change..." writes Ross Bolleter, Western Australia's maestro of the ruined piano, in the new edition of his book *The Well Weathered Piano*. "Ruins are what remain... Ruined pianos sing the chaos at the heart of the colonial enterprise: an Australian expression of the heart of darkness." According to one authority writing in 1890, 700 000 of the instruments – bearers of European culture and status – had been shipped out to a white settler population totalling three million. Ruined pianos, for Bolleter, are ones which are more than neglected, but less than devastated. He had been working with a prepared piano when he discovered his first ruined one, on a family holiday in 1987 at Nallan Sheep Station, Western Australia – ruination is the ultimate preparation. In 2005, he curated the first Ruined Piano Convergence, at Perth Institute of Contemporary Art.

After the event, the 17 pianos involved were moved to Wambyn Olive Farm near York, on the wheatbelt outside Perth, run by Kim Hack and Penny Mossop. This region is the hinterland between Perth – the largest urban area in the world after Los Angeles – and the Outback. It looked remarkably like the English countryside during my spring visit, when the vegetation was still very green.

Hack and Bolleter opened proceedings with a tour of the ruined piano 'paddock'. Hack has protected some of the instruments from the worst ravages of ruination by erecting wooden rain shelters, but 'sanctuary' is a bit of a misnomer since most have become almost unplayable – returned to the state of nature from which their wooden parts emerged. This is the ruined piano ethos, and animal life finds refuge in them – from nesting mice to poisonous redback spiders and scorpions.

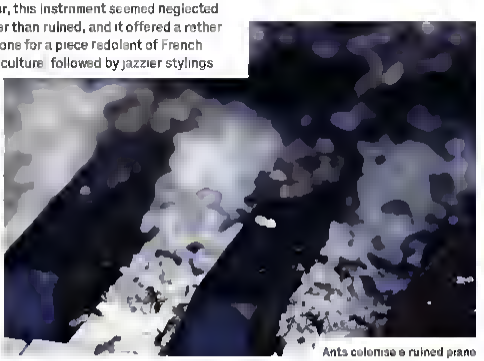
The most "natural" was a 19th century wood-framed Chellen upright, in the process of being eaten by white ants, who were transforming its insides into a Gothic cathedral of ingested wood, as Bolleter puts it. Another instrument he named 'rat piano' because it was rat-infested when he found it, a German Lindel piano had been occupied by frogs. A grand piano proudly bears the nameplate "Specially Made for the Australian Climate – Squire of London" – but conditions like those at the sanctuary were not envisaged. The sculptural aspects – which in the Squire grand are dramatic – are to me as fascinating as the musical ones.

Bolleter's performance took place on three pianos arranged in a triangle. In the middle of a quiet glade. Ambient noise was part of the performance – raucous Australian crows, pet dogs whimpering or playfully fighting. The three pianos included a Bolleter favourite: the former bar piano from the Bell Hotel near Cue. The pianist sits on a cushion, plucking strings below the keyboard with his left hand, and gently caressing the keys with his right. Next he turns to the former Nallan sheep station piano, in a piece dedicated to the owner, in which the instrument struggles to express what could be a poignant lament.

Bolleter is a poet of the ruined piano keyboard. These instruments are mostly no longer capable of fortissimo, and he strokes the weather-beaten keys with delicacy and care. His final piece features ruined accordion also – wheezy and in need of repair, this instrument seemed neglected rather than ruined, and it offered a rather full tone for a piece redolent of French cafe culture, followed by jazzier stylings on piano. The concert is an emotional experience. Bolleter hears in the wail of these piano's ever-ringing tones the grief of an indigenous people killed in massacres and through transmitted diseases – the pain of separation of the generation stolen from their parents. There could have been a dada aspect to the ruined piano phenomenon, but this deeply emotional attachment suggests otherwise. Maybe the aural experience is enhanced on the pianist's recordings, where ambient sounds feature strongly, but the al fresco setting creates its own unique atmosphere for the event.

For many of the 40 or 50 people attending, the climax of the day's events was the burning of a piano (a model which Bolleter and his friends clearly had no attachment to). Not having attended such an event before, it was interesting to see that it didn't go quite as planned – the wooden corner posts of this sturdy specimen didn't disintegrate, so there was no total collapse. In the increasingly chilly wheatbelt twilight, it was good to feel the heat from the fire, and I left while the beast was still crackling.

Andy Hamilton



Ants colonise a ruined piano

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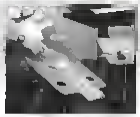

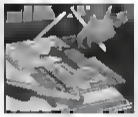

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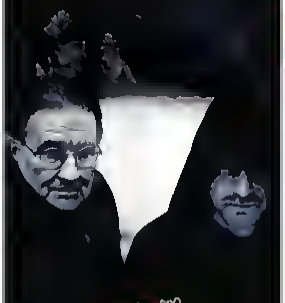

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Choir With Electronics, (2001) performed by UEA Chamber Choir conducted by Nanette Nielsen and other works with electronics performed by Jonathan Impett.

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5-14 DECEMBER 2008

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Sat 6 & Sun 7 Dec **Mike Westbrook's Glad Day**

Mon 8- Wed 10 Dec **Ukulele Orchestra of Great Britain**

Thurs 11 Dec **Abdullah Chhadeh & Nara**

Fri 12 Dec **LaXula**

Sat 13 Dec **Grand Union Orchestra & Friends**

Sun 14 Dec **Mary Hampton & Jim Moray**

ARTS ADMIN.

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ARTS COUNCIL ENGLAND

Out There

This month's selected festivals, live events and clubs. Compiled by Lisa Blanning

Send info to: Listings, *The Wire*, 23 Jack's Place, 6 Corbet Place, London E1 6NN, UK. Fax: +44 (0)20 7422 6011. Email: listings@thewire.co.uk

UK Festivals

All Tomorrow's Parties: The Nightmare Before Christmas Minehead
Midwinter holiday camp bash programmed by Mike Patton and Melvins, with Melvins, Fantômas, Os Mutantes, Meat Puppets, Taraf De Haïdouks, Bernard Parmegiani, The Locust, Fennesz, Dälek, The Damned, Neil Hamburger, Kool Keith & Kutmasta Kurt, JG Thirlwell's Manorexia, Squarepusher, Butthole Surfers, Teenage Jesus And The Jerks, Stockhausen's *Kontakte* by Steinberg & Winant and more. Minehead Butlins, 5–7 December. £160/festival pass including accommodation, atpfestival.com

Huddersfield Contemporary Music Festival Huddersfield
Major gathering of the New Music tribes this year sponsored by *The Wire*, including a focus on Dutch composer and theorist Dick Raaijmakers, a new commission by John Butcher, a celebration of the 60th anniversary of musique concrete and Pierre Schaeffer, the work of James Tenney & Lawrence English residency, 12 hour concert installation featuring Rhodri Davies & Radu Malfatti, Terre Thaemlitz, muslkFabrik performing works by Stockhausen and Sun Ra, John Cage's 1954 New York Town Hall concert reclaimed and more. Huddersfield various venues, 21–30 November, hcmf.co.uk

2:13 London
Workshops, gigs, films (each 2'13" long) and art with performances from Veryan Weston Quartet, Toot (Axel Dorner/Phil Minton/Thomas Lehn), Die Brice Quartet, Relay (three locations and 16 musicians) and more. London Cafe Oto, 26–30 November. £11/festival pass, £5/night (workshops are free). 2-13.co.uk

International Festivals

Akousma(5) Canada
Electroacoustic dedication with immersive concerts from Sebastien Roux, Phroq, Pete Stollery, Jacques Poulin-Denis & Martin Messier, Georges Forget, Christian Bouchard, Derran Copeland and Robert Normandeau. Montréal Monument National, 10–13 December, reseauxconcerts.com

Fr Ketz Switzerland
Three nights of progressive sounds with Lau Nau, Dimens on X, Mixhell, Azeotrop, Doddodo, Juerg Halter & Julian Sartorius and more. Düdingen Bad Bonn, 11–13 December, badbonn.ch

Madeira Dig Portugal
Digital arts festival taking place on Madeira Island with live performances by Cluster, Dyal, Scanner, Ryoichi Kurokawa, Philip Jeck, Nuno Rebelo and Vitor Joaquim & Hugo Dlim plus workshops, a retrospective exhibition of Madelran video artist Carlos Caires and more. Calheta various venues, 5–7 December, madeiradig.net

MEM Spain
A month of music, dance, theatre, film readings, masterclasses and more in the Basque country. With Signal, Lightning Bolt, São Paulo Underground, Pain Jerk, Die Audiogruppe, Carsten Nicolai, Guy Ben Ner, Le Dernier Cri, Marco Belonzi & David Casacuberta, Santo File, Juan Lopez and more. Bilbao various venues, to 3 December, musicaexmachina.com

Risonanze Italy
A series of concerts mark autumn's Risonanze event in Venice. Angel (Ilpo Väisänen/Dirk Dresselhaus/Hildur Gudnadottir, 27 November), Mark Stewart & The Maffia (4 December). Venice Teatro Fondamenta Nuove. teatrofondamentanuove.it

Sonic Protest France
Challenging series of concerts supported by *The Wire* featuring Ghedalia Tazartes & Reines d'Angleterre, The Skull Defekts, Carl Michael von Hausswolff, Lerf Elggren, Deerhoof, Parenthetical Girls, Dimension X, Joëlle Léandre, Brainbombs, Noël Akchoté, Shit & Shine, Gol & Charles Heyward and more. Paris various venues, 9–14 December, sonicprotest.com

State-X New Forms The Netherlands
Experimental forms at The Trojan Horse with confirmed artists including Lau Nau, Jack Rose, Rhys Chatham, Black Dog, Ignetz, Red Snapper, Shit & Shine, Jazzsteppa, Peter Broderick and more. Den Haag, Paard van Troje, 12–13 December. state-xnewforms.nl

Les Urbaines Switzerland
Contemporary arts festival including visual arts, dance, theatre and a music arm featuring Pierre Bastien, Shit & Shine, The Group Show (Jan Jelinek/Andrew Pekler/Henno Leichtmenn), Alog, The Telescopes and more. Lausanne various venues, 4–6 December. urbaines.ch

Special Events

John Cage: *Imaginary Landscapes* Concerts & *Musicircus* Spain
An exhibition presenting the revolutionary composer as a living figure with presentations of his work in concerts, scenarios and more. Castelló Espai d'Art Contemporani, to 25 December. eascc.es

DING>>DDNG UK
FACT's sound, design, music and interactive exhibition with collaborative piece *Energy Suite* from Peter Saville. Liverpool based video artist Hembi Herelambous and Andy McClusky. *The Fragmented Orchestra* (see below). Tetsuaki Baba's *Freqtric Drums*, plus works by The Owl Project, Philip Jeck, Ray Lee, Steve Symon, Luke Jerram and more. Liverpool FACT, 12 December–22 February. fact.co.uk

Expended Cineme For Rothko UK
A weekend of moving image installations inspired by the painter featuring *The Room*, where 16mm films by Luke Fowler and Peter Todd are intertwined with live guitar improvisation by Keith Rowe (28 November, 7pm), plus a two day presentation of the work of Malcolm Le Grice. London Tate Modern, 26–30 November, free. tate.org.uk

The Fragmented Orchestra UK
The winner of 2006's PRS Foundation New Music Award is a collaboration between artist Jane Grant, musician and physicist John Matthias and composer Nick Ryan of a distributed musical structure modelled on the firing of neurons in the human brain. 24 sites across the UK form a networked cortex, which will adapt, evolve and trigger sounds from the sites via the main gallery. Liverpool FACT, 12 December–22 February, thefragmentedorchestre.com

Ryoji Ikeda France
Worldwide exposure for the Japanese composer and artist's *data* series continues in Paris. Paris Grand Palais, 18–31 December (*data tron* installation). ryojiikeda.com

Kill Your Timid Notion On Tour UK
KYTN organised premium programme for a CMN tour supported by *The Wire*. With screenings and performances from Ken Jacobs, Greg Pope, Bruce McClure, La Cellule d'Intervention Metamkine, Andrew Lampert, Paul Sharits, Kjell Bjørgeengen and Keith Rowe. London BFI, IMAX and ICA (29–30 November), Bristol Spike Island and Arnolfini (2–4 December), Glasgow CCA (6–7 December), erika.org.uk

Magical Sound Machines Austria
An exhibition in three parts of early sound recorders (such as Edison's 1877 phonograph, Paul Ehrlich's 1862 anston and Russian talking paper from 1932), sound transmitters (including a replica of Popov's 1895 receiver) and sound generators (like von Kempelen's speaking machine from the late 18th century and Spielmann's 1928 superpiano). Hainburg Kulturfabrik, to 19 April. kulturfabrik.hainburg.at

The Merfe Sessions USA
Sound works including five new site-specific commissions in the host gallery and embedded within the public spaces and private corners of this West Texas town. Featured artists include Kaffe Matthews, Christina Kubisch, Steve Roden & Stephen Vitiello and more. Marfe Ballroom, to 1 February, ballroommarfa.org

Gordon Monahan Austria
The Canadian composer, pianist and sound artist presents a multi-channel sound piece for piano in the latest for the ongoing series of sound art in a permanent venue. Vienna Tonspur, to 31 January, tonspur.at

Jeff Mills presents *X-102 Rediscovers The Rings Of Saturn* UK
Exclusive presentation of the Mills' directed documentary film about his musical project of the same name with a director's talk and Q&A plus musical soundscape provided in bar by Mills and Steve Bicknell. London ICA, 4 December, 8pm, £10. lost.co.uk

My Secret Heart UK
World premiere of the music and film installation by Streetwise Opera and Mire Calix re-interpreting Allegri's *Miserere Mei* drawing on the opera company's work with homeless people. London Royal Festival Hall, 3 December, 7.30pm & 9pm, free (booking necessary). southbankcentre.co.uk

Hayley Newman UK
Exhibition, supported by *The Wire* of *MiniFlux*, an installation of over 1000 props used or referenced in Fluxus musical scores, made into miniature plasticine models by the British artist. Newcastle a.i.t. gallery, to 24 January. aitgallery.org

Cereten Nicolei Germany
Solo exhibition Anti Reflex for the artist musician and member of the Raster-Noton triumvirate. Hamburg Kunsthalle, to 7 December. hamburger-kunsthalle.de

Perspectives 163: Every Sound You Can Imagine USA
Tracing the development of musical notation and considering experimental musical scores as works of visual art with works from John Cage, Earle Brown, and Karlheinz Stockhausen through Christian Marclay, Stephen Vitiello, Merlne Rosenfeld and more. Houston Contemporary Arts Museum, to 7 December, free, camh.org

Sensationel Fix Italy
An exhibition focusing on the multidisciplinary activities of Sonic Youth since their formation in 1981 featuring their collaborations with artists, film makers, designers and musicians, plus SY paraphernalia. Bolzano Museion, to 4 January. museion.it

Telephone UK
Telephone presents sound works by artists that can only be experienced by phone by an individual caller. December features Kieron Dennis's *Question Answer Question* (22 November–21 December) +44 (0) 207 503 9044, calls charged at the standard UK landline rate

Andy Warhol
UK
Major exhibition of the influential artist's work which includes 19 of his films: screen tests of artists such as Allen Ginsberg, Marcel Duchamp, John Cale and Salvador Dali, Factory diaries, all 42 episodes of his 80s cable TV serials and more. London Hayward, to 18 January, southbankcentre.co.uk

On Stage

Ahe Vigede
Angular LA punks. London Old Blue Last (1 December), London The Dome (with Mika Miko, 2), Manchester Deaf Institute (3), Liverpool Korova (4), Nottingham Bodega Social (5)

elva noto + Uusitalo + Donnacha Costello
Stellar bill of electronic music with Carsten Nicolai and Vladislav Delay's fractured groove alter-ego. Liverpool Kazimier, 6 December, 9pm, £5

Arctic Circle Christmas Concert
Festive delights with Josh Weller, Palome Ferth, Ted Barnes, Dale Grundle & Harry Escott and the Arctic Circle Ensemble & Puffin Voices plus Will Dutta & Non Peters performing Arvo Pärt's *Spiegel im Spiegel* as well as Janek Schaefer's Lucky Dip Disco. London Union chapel, 5 December, 7.30pm, £12/£10

Baby Dee
Plus support from Paul Curreri and Black Carrot. Aberdeen Tunnels (25 November), Glasgow Arches (26), Birmingham Glee Club (27), Coventry Taylor Johns (29), Brighton Freebutt (30), London Union Chapel (2 December), Galway Roisin Dubh (4), Dublin Whelans (5)

Band Of Holy Joy
This month's Jukebox victims perform a cabaret version of *Troubled Sleep*. London Chats Pelece, 5 December

Rhodri Davies
The harpist performs a programme of original work and pieces by the likes of Christian Wolff, Anton Lukoszevieze and more. London Toynbee Hall, 16 December, £10

Deerhoof
San Franciscan pop-bending art rock. London ULU, 2 December, 7.30pm, £12.50

Dimension X
Sci-fi improv rock with Chris Corsano/David Chalmin/Massimo Pupillo plus support from Doddodo. London Lumineire, 16 December, 8pm, £8

Fantômas
Performing *The Director's Cut* as part of ATP's Don't Look Back series. London Astoria, 8 December, 7pm, £17.50

From The Soundhouse
On the anniversary of his death, a tribute to Stockhausen with a free performance of two of his works from the late 60s: *Telemusik* and *Kurzwellen*. London St Leonard's Church, 5 December, 7.30pm, free

Fuzzy Lights
Cambridge based noisy psych-folk. Cambridge Portland Arms (26 November), London The Harrison (30). Salford Sacred Trinity Church (5 December). Newcastle Head Of Steam (7)

Junctions: English Music Breaking Formation
Spiers & Boden and The Tacet Ensemble join to combine traditional English folk and contemporary classical to explore common threads. Brighton Komedia (29 November), Milton Keynes Stables Theatre (6 December). Oxford Jacqueline du Pré Music Building (11), Surrey Cranleigh Arts Centre (13). Crawley Hawth Theatre (10 January). Bracknell South Hill Park (17)

Félix Lajko
Hungarian-Yugoslavian virtuoso of the violin and zither. London Union Chapel (with Rachel Unthank & The Winterset, 11 December). Northampton Fishmarket (13)

Last Harbour
Noise-folk orchestrations. Manchester Ruby Lounge (19 December), Newcastle Cumberland Arms (20)

London Improvisers Orchestra
Tenth anniversary celebratory concert with conductions, improvisations and special guests. London HMS President, 7 December 8pm, £7/£5

London Sinfonietta
40th anniversary concert for the contemporary music ensemble with new commissions by Larry Goves, Christian Mason and Claudia Molitor plus works by Harrison Birtwistle and John Adams. London Queen Elizabeth Hall, 2 December, 7.30pm, £22–£9

Meat Puppets
The influential American group perform *Meat Puppets II* as part of Don't Look Back. London ULU, 4 December, 7.30pm, £14.50

Melvins
The original big-haired stoner rockers. London Scala, 9 December, 7.30pm, £15

Mika Miko
Grrrl trouble-punks from Los Angeles. London The Dome (with Abe Vigoda, 2 December). Worcester Firetly (3), Sheffield Corporation (4)

Kan Mikami
Exclusive UK date for the celebrated Japanese surrealist folk and Enka blues performer. With support from Directing Hand. London Cafe Oto, 6 December, 8pm, £9

Minghe Morte, Plummer's World Sanguine Report + Bilbao Syndrome
Ten musicians across three groups linking jazz and New Music scenes from London and Leeds. London Vortex, 15 December, 8.15pm, £8

Olivier Pasquet
Real-time interactive system compostion from IRCAM representative. Belfast Queen's University Sonic Arts Research Centre, 16 December, 1pm, free

The Post Quartet
A new ensemble presenting a programme of works by Christian Wolff, Cornelius Cardew, John Cage, John Lely, Tim Parkinson, Tom Johnson and others. London Cafe Oto, 11 December, 7.30pm, £6

Powerplant
The percussion/sound design/visuals trio perform new multimedia works by Graham Fitkin and Gabriel Prokofiev as well as original pieces and others by Javier Alvarez and Steve Reich. Brighton Dome Pavilion Theatre (6 December)

Pumajaw
Eclectic folk duo Pinkie Maclure and John Wills. London Windmill (28 November). Edinburgh Voodoo Rooms (4 December)

RTX
Jennifer Herrema's outfit headlines and (on seleted dates) supports Primal Scream. Oxford Academy (with Primal Scream, 20 November), Cardiff University (21), Bristol Croft (22), Bristol Academy (PS, 23), Southampton Guildhall (PS, 24), Reading Hexagon (PS, 25), London Cargo (27), Hammersmith Apollo (PS, 28), Norwich UEA (PS, 30), Sheffield Academy (PS, 1 December), Brighton Dome (PS, 2), Birmingham Academy (PS, 4), Cambridge Corn Exchange (PS, 5), Edinburgh Cabaret Voltaire (7), Leeds Academy (PS, 8), Newcastle Academy (PS, 9), Manchester Apollo (PS, 11), Glasgow SECC (PS, 13), Glasgow Captains Rest (14)

Irmin Schmidt & Kumo
Can founder brings his collaborative project with producer Kumo for a live London date. London Jazz Cafe, 9 December, 7pm, £22.50

Scottish Toy Orkestra, Tottie Toes + 7Hertz
An evening of off-kilter soundscapes. Glasgow CCA, 10 December, 8pm, £5

Shackleton
Live set from Skull Disco's snake charmer plus support from Bass Clef and Afrikan Boy as well as DJs and visuals from AntiVJ. Bristol Croft, 20 December, 7pm, £7

Squarepusher
Tour supporting new Warp album *Just A Souvenir*. London Astoria (with LED, 9 December), Glasgow ABC (with Nathan Fake + Numbers DJs, 11), Manchester Warehouse (with Luke Vibert, 12)

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Taraf De Haïdeuks
Additional performances for the Romanian Gypsy group around their ATP appearance. London Union Chapel (7 December). Bristol St George's (8)

Trembling Bells
Alex Neilson spin-off song based project. Oxford Prince Of Wales, 7 December

UTR's Fifth Birthday Party
Popular London promoters Upset The Rhythm celebrate their fifth anniversary with live performances from Zach Hill (Hella), The Present and Trencher. London Cargo, 10 December, 8pm, £9

Winter Music at Toynbee Studios
Fulborn Teversham and Leafcutter John (5 December, £12/£10), Mike Westbrook's Glad Day with Phil Minton performing settings of William Blake's poetry (7), The Ukulele Orchestra Of Great Britain (8), Abdullah Ibhadeh & Nara (11), LaXula (12), Grand Union Orchestra & Friends (13) and Mary Hampton + Jim Moray (14, £12/£10). London Toynbee Studios, 7.30pm. £15/£12 unless otherwise indicated

Club Spaces

Bleep43
Electronic music irregular for discerning enthusiasts with DJ sets from Surgeon and DJ Pete plus live sets from Scorn, Plant43 and others. London Corsica Studios, 5 December, 10pm, £15/£12, bleep43.com

Boat-Ting
Regular improv and poetry club on a boat on the Thames. With Lol Coxhill & guests, Roland Ramanan/Javier Carmona/Roberto Sassi, Alex Ward & guests, Sibylline Sisters (1 December), John Russell & Henry Lowther, Kay Grant & Alex Ward, FD Batman (15). London Yacht Club, every first and third Monday of the month. 8pm, £6/£4, D2D B659 3406. boat-ting.com

Cellar Door
Monthly audio-visual event in the Lake District with DJ sets from Radioactive Man, Mister Sushi, Fidge, Nisha and Jon Tinning. Barrow In Furness Cinema Room 6 December, 8pm, £7. myspace.com/44breaks

Club Integral
Concert series of adventurous sounds continues with I Am A Kamura and Andrew Johnson. London Cafe Oto, 5 December, 8pm, £7, divineagency.org

FIZZLE
Regular improv night with Chris Cundy/Javier Carmona/Ole Brice/Alex Hawkings (2 December, £5/£3), Lol Coxhill/Frode Gjerstad/Paal Nilssen-Love/Nick Stephens (16, £8/£6). Birmingham Lamp Tavern, 8.45pm, myspace.com/improvisationbirmingham

Frakaso
New audiovisual night from Liverpool's Frakture organisation with performances from Good Noise, Bad Noise, Mark Pilkington and Filario Farinoppo Trio. Liverpool Magnet, 30 November (last Sundays monthly), 9pm, £3, frakture.org

Frimp
Ongoing free improv night with Bruce Coates/Han-Earl Park/Mike Hurley/Walt Shew/Trevor Lines. Birmingham Station Pub, 3 December, 9pm, £6/£4, frimp.co.uk

Immersion
Experimental electronics, noise, drones and rhythms partnered with projected visuals with ABKomm, Alnegak, Infinite Scale, Removal Company, Suero and Zeinetics. London Flea Pit, 4 December, 7pm, free, immersionclub.tk

Kalriflower
New regular improv and experimental night featuring live performances from Black Tempest, Crater, Lunar Dunes, Quem Sum Parva and tDAD. Winchester Railway, 13 December, 8pm, £4/£3, myspace.com/kalriflowerpromotion

Klinker Kings Cross
London free music institution goes central. With Akafred, Isnaj Dul, Oconomy (4 December), Nigel Burch, Germander Speedwell, Data, Poltergroom (18). London Cross Kings, first and third Thursdays monthly, 9pm, £5/£3, lotacism.com/klinkerizer/index.shtml

Klinker South
The Klinker below the river re-opens with Liz Bentley, UV Zone and Fowl Geese. London Ivy House, 3 December (first Wednesdays monthly), 8.30pm, £5/£3, lotacism.com/klinkerizer/index.shtml

Klinker Stoke Newington
Live music from Microwave Meditations, Frottage Crecks Dnl, Hugh Metcalfe & Ian McLachlan (26th birthday event, 2 December), Ed Shuster & Claudia, Blistrap, Lawrence Upton (9), Sean Bonney, Kola Bear Night Terrors, The Bellerom Dextrose Sleep Deprivation Experiement, Ensemble Progrisivo (16), Grazzy Noel, You Be Me (23), Clive Bell/Max Hallett/Taeko Kunishima, Frank Bangay & Tunde Busari (30). London Maggie's Bar, every Tuesday, 8.30pm, £5/£3, lotacism.com/klinkerizer/index.shtml

Klinker Tottenham
The ever-expanding Klinker empire opens in a new neighbourhood. With Graen, Blue Shirts, Perheps Contraption (12 December), Mescheissevolkescalf, Sean Cundy & Friends (26). London Tottenham Chances, second and fourth Fridays monthly, 8pm, £5/£3. lotacism.com/klinkerizer/index.shtml

Late at Tate
Beaconsfield adapts Tate Britain's Duveen Galleries and transitory places with Katherine Araniello, Dave Ball, BAW, Annie Davey, Minne Haukka, Susannah Hewlett, Howard Jacques, Hayley Newman & David Crawforth, Liz Murray and more. London Tate Britain, 5 December, 6pm, free, tate.org.uk

Mopomoso
Monthly improv staple with an end of year celebration with around 50 musicians in various permutations including Kay Grant, John Russell, Steve Beresford, Lol Coxhill, Phil Minton, John Coxon, Pat Thomas, Tony Mersh, Dominic Lash and more plus free refreshments. London Vortex, 21 December (third Sundays monthly), 6pm, £10/£8, mopomoso.com

Numbers
Glasgow underground core monthly with Artern-8 and DJ Orgasmic plus Numbers residents. Glasgow Sub Club, 5 December (first Fridays monthly), 11pm, £10. myspace.com/numbers1234567B

On The Edge
Improvised and experimental music with an edgy Christmas special from Alan Tomlinson/Steve Beresford/Roger Turner and The Safehouse 'Wildcard' Quartet. Brighton Open House Pub, 17 December, 8.30pm, £6/£5, myspace.com/safehousebrighton

Open Ear
Sonic experimentation on the Kent Coast with performances and pieces by CONTACT, Paul Adams, Andrew Gower and Matt Wright. Broadstairs Canterbury Christ Church University, 4 December, 8pm. openeer.wordpress.com

Recluse
Monthly electro-acoustic night with Burning Zoo, Fractured Waves and more. London Flea Pit, 18 December, 7.30pm, free, recluse01.com

Retrieval
Irregular event series featuring improvised and experimental music from John Butcher & Mark Wastell, Tomas Korber, John Wall, Lee Gamble, Philip Julian & Matt Milton. London Gramaphone, 25 November, 7.30pm, £5, a-version.co.uk/tickets

Soundklatsch
Semi-regular improv night featuring the new trio of John Wall/Mark Sanders/John Edwards. Bristol Cube Cinema, 14 December, 7.30pm, £5. myspace.com/soundklatsch

This Is Tuesday
A new weekly series for the musically curious with Critical Distortions (Natalie Clein/Simon Fisher Turner/Shiva Feshereki, 2 December), Annie Gosfield's EWA7, Halel Kebab Hut and films (9), Graham Fitkin's Multiplier Series (16). London Kings Place, every Tuesday, 8pm, £11.50, kingsplace.co.uk

Trouble Tune
The Z-U trio host a new monthly jazz hangout at the Southbank with guest Dave Okumu. London Hayward Gallery Concrete Bar, 17 December, 6pm, free, concrete-daynight.co.uk

Under_Score
Techno plus monthly with the regular event featuring DJ Guy and plus residents (Bristol The Tube, 6 December, 10pm, £4) plus under_score vs Triptic with Donnacha Costello + under_score and Triptic residents (Bristol Dojo Lounge, 12 December, 11pm, £7), underscoremusic.co.uk

Incoming

All Tomorrow's Parties Australia Australia
The ever-expanding ATP empire closes in on the International dateline with this festival Down Under programmed by Nick Cave & The Bad Seeds, With Cave & Seeds, Spiritualized, Harmonia, James, Blood Ulmer, Afrirampo, Silver Apples, M Gira, The Necks and more. Mt Buller Ski Resort, 9–10 January. atpfestival.com

Robert Ashley USA
Performances of three of his operas, *Dust, Celestial Excursions* and *Mode Out Of Concrete*, by the La Mama Experimental Theatre Club. New York La Mama, 15–25 January, lamama.org

BLOC UK
Holiday camp raving in a bigger, better location with Future Sound Of London, Jamie Lidell, Afrika Bambaataa, Carl Craig, Lee 'Scratch' Perry, Kode9, Pole, Appleblim, 2562, Rob Hood, Redshape, Joker, B2B, Blazey, Rusko, Scientist, Coki and more. Minehead Butlins, 13–15 March. £125. blocweekend.com

David Grubbs UK
UK dates for the key post-rock player supporting his new album *An Optimist Notes The Dusk*. Brighton Prince Albert (19 January), Leicester The Musician (20), Glasgow Mono (21), London Luminaire (22), Bristol The Croft (23), Dublin Whelans (24)

Grace Jones UK
Tour supporting new album *Hurricane*. Birmingham Symphony Hall (19 January), Gateshead Sage (21), Glasgow Clyde Auditorium (22), Manchester Apollo (24), Bristol Colston Hall (25), London Roundhouse (27–28)

Total Immersion: Stockhausen UK
The first of three composer days where The BBC Symphony Orchestra and guests celebrate a particular composer with concerts, talks and free events. London various venues, 17 January, times/prices very. bbc.co.uk/symphonyorchestra □

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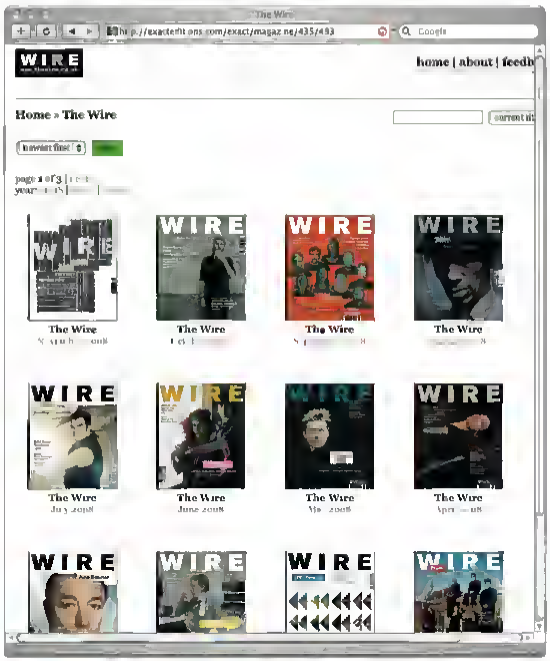

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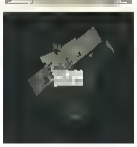

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Slicker, Rhys Chatham, Angels Jaeger & David Cunningham, DAF, Tom Ze, Meridian (Percy Howard/Fred Frith/Bill Laswell/Charles Hayward), Jane Dowe & Terre Thaemlitz, Terwater, Powerfield, Sam Prekop, Puppy, Jad Fair & Ye La Tengo, The Pastels, Badawi, Labradford

The Wire Tapper 3 Issue 182 April 1999
Supersilent, High Rise, Rothko, We Gas, Te Recece, Rat Thuraton Moore/Evan Parker/Walter Prati, Model 500, Pandit Shiv Kumar Sharma, Khan, Head, Paul Panhuysen, Robert Ashley, Sheila Chandra, Vo d, Rhys Chatham

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FX Randemia, Pierre Bastien, and Pan American & DJ Cole, Vandermark 5, SS+D, Aleq, Powerfield, Low Res, Chief Bannaka & His Budu Men, Clive Graham, Da Meke Say Think, Warn Defever, Signal, Klangstabil, Unit, Daniel Figgis

The Wire Tapper 5 Issue 193 March 2000
Lahrantford, Stephen Vitiello, Vainn/Vaisanen/Einhart, Kimmo Pohjonen, Wire, Stylus, John Wall, Curd Duca, Fennesz/O Fe uke/Rehberg, I m Sore Ve Nosse Camp, Daniel Givens, Arne Nordheim, Ye La Teage, Vert, Aesop Quartet, Mira Calix, Fushitsusha

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CD 2. Nurse With Wound, Faust, John Fahey, Nils Okland, Ceil, Janek Schaefer, Current Ninety Three, Djiven Gasparyan, Peanut Butter Wolf featuring Rasco l Sound, BitTonic & si-(cut), 9b, C-Schula & Hajsch, Tom Recchion, Pluramon, Hermann Nitsch

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Four Tet, Pulseprogramming, Daniel Figgis, Jin Hi Kim, Kim Hiorthey, Antibalas Afrobeat Orchestra, Bigg Jus, Nolte, Steinbruchel, M ce Parade, Illus on Of Safety, Monks Of The Monastery Of Gyüto, Tiket, Eardrum, Lasse Marhaug, Max Nagl/Edward Gorey featuring, Julie Tippetts

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23 Skidoo, Jah Wobble & Temple Of Sound, Cornelius, Fog, Goldheart Allen Powell Trio, Chas Smith, Masheal, Jon Fink, Murcof/Electrelane, Ne Neck Blues Band, Set Fire To Flames, Workshop, Smell Racks, The Rip-Off Artist, Nexage, Xinli Supreme

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CD 1. Liars, Themselves, Tarwater, Mom, Badaw, Suicide, Supersilent, Fellwechsel/Fennesz, Wazahugy, Ase-Chang & Junray, Deadbeat, Vedim, The Oxes, Sagen, Leafcutter John, Sun
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Hanne Hukkelberg, Mandarin Movie, Alexander Hacke, Matt Elliott, Juana Molina, Picastro, Devastenists, Kid606, Ariel Pink's Haunted Graffiti, John Surman, Nick Castro, Junkboy, Akiman, Cumtuck Co., Bembey 1, Fays, Cometime Orchestra, Port Royal, Faust, Hex, Tu M

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Oren Marshall, Dirty Projectors, Secret Mommy, Cage, Ray Russell, Keran Hebden & Steve Reid, Black Te Comm, Cobra Killer, Gerry Mitchell & Little Sparta, Xxl, Merz, Hans Fjellestad, Nels Cline/Wally Shoup/Chris Cersano, Andrey Kritchenko, This Heat, Meka

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Humcrush, Leafcutter John, Machinefabriek, Reverskaphen, Yannis Kyriakides & Andy Moor, Jozef Van Wissem, Hwyl Nafa, Giuseppe Ielasi, Garrett & John Wiese, Dub Trio, Iau, Meken, Lawrence English & At Yamamoto, Herbert, Sal Sleppy, Travor Watts, Gricer, Speencurve, Isnej Dui, Det Gamle Landet

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Drone Spiderhead, Dave Phillips, Alan Vega, Ph llip Sinstein, Carter Tutti, rad celfashian, Weiter & Sobnne, Xele, Ketra & Zavoleka, Pansonic, Huntsville, Fluorescent Gray, Derek Bailey, Tulpamanie, Dave Swain, eMute, Cul fone, Inch time, White Magic, The Slits, Anthony Kelly & David Stalling

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Eplentne Geuzy, Longstone, A Hawk And A Hacksaw & The Hun Hangár, Ensemble Jonquil, KammarRimmer, Kollektief, Sadun, Ven Sudenfed, Femessl, Throbbing Gristle, Alfred 23 Herth, Fred Anderson & Harrison, Bankhead, Fridge, Jack Rasu & Glenn Jenss, Hueky, Rescue, Simon Scalish, Venus Bagardus, Tanesucker, stimulos, Zellenspie, Ken Ikeda

The Wire Tapper 18 Issue 284 October 2007
Automated Acoustics, Strings Of Consc ousness, John Luther Adams, hamaYoko, The Focus Group, Cath & Phil Tyler, The Ex & Getatchew Mekuria & Guests, Medfield, Tey Orchestra, Herbert, Friedl, the fun years, Demon & Naomi, Grodeljeal, Icarus, Tarentel, Babils, Luciene Cills, Hulk, Dimension X, Mordant Music

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Our Sleepless Forest, Snorkel, N ce Muthy, G F Fitz-Gerald & Lol Coxhill, X A Cute feat. Mike Ladd, Daniel Figgis v e Semadrome, Fluorescent Grey-Keffe Matthews, Alexe Ronsev & Anton Nikkilä, Talv n Singh, Illus on Of Safety, The Master Musicians Of Hop Freg, Pheg Mesheen, Setsuben Keen Unit, P nk Skull, LowDynamicOrchestra with Stefano Scodanibbio, Lars Akerlund, Tangtype, Yellow8, Never Enough Hope

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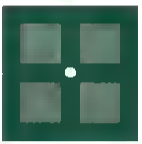
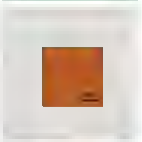
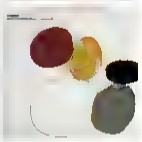
Mike Osborne, Zavoleka, Grails, Punck, Pantaleiman, microenemicus, Anthony Kelly & David Stalling, Wounded Knee, eRSe, rarescale, Crackle, Mahel, Formication, Panvoharju, Tertium Quid, A_dentigny, Richard J Vales, Lather, Ohlmeier/Isenbard, Khaustalev, Random Touch







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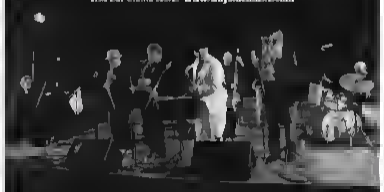

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Scott Hull is a nearly well known in the grindmetal underground for his eleven-string riffage in Pig Destroyer and Agoraphobic Nosebleed, but what isn't as well known is that the man has also been busy working on dark, sumptuous soundscapes and film scores down in the Visualresound lair that have just recently been appearing over the past few years. Scott's Requiem CD that came out through Relapse Records earlier this year was one of the first official releases of his film score/soundscape work, and was widely embraced by fans of bleak cinematic ambience and chilling electronic sound sculpture. Crucial Blast is following that amazing disc with a series of limited-edition 3" CDs that each feature a short, 10+ minute piece of fearsome dark ambient music from Scott that showcase his skill at blending blackened Lustmordian drift with terrifying musing techniques that jolt the mind's eye with unnerving, nightmarish sound events.

This first part of the Audiofilm Series is a terrifying fog of elements: drone that utilizes delirious stereo panning and slabs of obsidian ambience, and it slowly unfolds over the angst of the piece to reveal layers of malevolent black drone and unsettling voices seemingly lost between planes of shadow. Audiofilm I plays out like a wildly hallucinogenic horror film score, and anyone into Scott's previous ambient/soundscape work will find this to be one of his darkest pieces yet. The disc is limited to a single pressing of 1,000 copies, packaged in a tiny 4" x 4" glossy gatefold jacket with stunning full color artwork from artist Sekton Hunt. Recommended to enthusiasts of Painkiller's Execution Ground ambient disc, Lustmord and Scorn.

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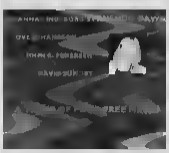

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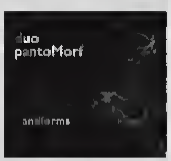

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Epiphanies

Jonny Trunk explains how he graduated from the Open University to major in the secret realm of sound defined by library music

The early years of my musical life were filled with soundtracks. A love of Henry Mancini emerged from seeing the *Pink Panther* films as a child at the cinema. An appreciation for Lalo Schifrin scores developed from watching cops, crooks and spy flicks with friends. And a fascination with Ennio Morricone blossomed thanks to my father forcing me to watch any Spaghetti Western that was scheduled on British TV during the late 1970s. Looking back, I also realise that much of my soundtrack schooling and obsession came from watching very late night TV: specifically, the Open University. As yet I've not signed up for an OU correspondence course, but in those quiet, early hours, OU programmes became a touch educational, oddly retro and fascinatingly musical. I'd watch bleary eyed as demonstrations of atomic happenings or microscopic dramas involving plankton or larvae would be played out accompanied by otherworldly anonymous soundtracks. I loved them, craved them; they were like nothing else I'd heard, and I wanted to hear more. Naively, I even tried calling the OU to find out who was responsible for this scientific jazz and mutated classical music. I tried talking with cool record shop assistants about this mysterious soundtrecky stuff I was after, and they'd just stare back blankly. When it came to Open University music or the sounds of science, no one knew what the hell I was talking about.

Things changed in September 1994. I was on my hands and knees in a record emporium in Soho, central London, digging around in the boxes of records that had been placed underneath the racks. In secondhand record shops, this always seemed to be the place where the odd stuff would be dumped: the unwanted, unclassifiable and, by implication, worthless records that could not sit comfortably in the racks above. On one of these low level sorties I came across a peculiar record issued by a label called Bosworth Backgrounds. The album looked like no other. It was technical and academic in appearance, with a heavy sense of anonymity. There were no posed artist photographs on the sleeve; instead, it depicted crude line drawings of musical instruments on a flat slab of blue. Graphically or artistically it made no sense at all. The album title, *Dramatics Electronic*, was grammatically intriguing and instantly serious, and the complete tracklisting of 30 cues was written on the front. To my surprise, the tracklisting was repeated on the back, in both English and German, complete with terse musical descriptions. Each cue had concise, laboratory-like names such as "Amoebae", "Neutron Suspense" and "Cloud Environment". And all were composed and performed by a mysterious entity called Frank Gartner.

Squatting there on my knees with this LP in my hand was a sort of part-epiphany. I didn't really know what the record was, but became a touch giddy at the thought of what it might be. The full epiphany occurred a few hours later, back at home with the record on the turntable. As a sequence of brief electro incidentals wibbled and twinkled from the speakers, visions of bearded lecturers in brown overalls, baffling experiments and subaquatic life floated around my brain. This was the sound I'd been seeking, and I knew that a whole new world of music and adventure was about to be revealed.

There was an address on the back of the sleeve. I have always had something of a nosey, inquisitive nature, and so within the week I was standing outside a non-descript building on a side road off Regent Street in London's West End. A creaking front door opened onto a dusty suite of rooms full of old sheet music and piles of 78s. Here at the old Bosworth HQ, I discovered a whole lot more. The music they produced fell into the previously unknown (to me) category of 'library music', a secret realm of sound far from the visible commercial music world I knew. Library music LPs, I soon learned, were privately pressed by a handful of obscure companies like Bosworth, and distributed among organisations that needed the music, such as broadcasters, TV production companies and universities. The idea behind the records was simple: to provide readymade backgrounds and themes for TV and film makers, at a fraction of the cost of commissioning brand new one-off compositions. Not only did library music sound unlike anything else, the whole non-commercial, unobtainable, mysterious aspect of it made it impossibly attractive.

I walked away from the Bosworth HQ with a box full of library music albums. A week later I returned and begged them to let me produce a new compilation drawn from their archive. When the laughing had stopped, they said OK, which led to me setting up Trunk Records and issuing the first ever library music anthology, an album containing bizarre electronic interludes, future jazz and the sting from a 1960s Marmite commercial.

After the drought, a flood, and in the next few years more library music information and collectors started floating to the surface, filling in odd gaps in the story, revealing lost themes and unexpected musical quirks.

What also became hugely important to me was the idea of 'picture music'. Many of the faceless but hugely talented library musicians would get commissioned to write music for images that did not yet exist. In other words, they were producing soundtracks to their own imaginations. This approach, combined with the advancements in studio technology that emerged in the late 1960s and early 70s (the heyday of library music), resulted in a genre in which new recording techniques and instruments clashed with a wholly experimental way of making music. The end results could often be mind bogglingly original, hinting at soundtracks but often cross-referencing and fusing all manner of unlikely and outwardly incompatible sounds. Library musicians somehow made the impossible sound rather good.

I've been collecting albums of library music ever since. And they've taken me on a most fascinating, unexpected and quite peculiar journey. I've issued more lost library music, found Basil Kirchin, produced a book of library music cover art, and even travelled around the world as a library music DJ. On a slightly more embarrassing note, I currently hold the world record for the shortest track ever to enter the British Top 30 (at 35 seconds long), a little ditty wholly based on a 1965 library music track called "The Gonk". Discovering library music also started my fascination with archives, big or small, and the possibilities of compiling something new from a dusty box or room full of forgotten, rotting tape.

And the education is still ongoing, with more library music records and musicians being rediscovered all the time. All thanks to an LP I found in a box in Soho in 1994. And the Open University, of course. ☐

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This month we debut *The Wire* tote bag, complete with an original design by our very own Savage Pencil. Meanwhile, *The Wire* T-shirt still comes in two styles: a standard black shirt printed with *The Wire* logo, and a series of limited edition shirts featuring specially commissioned designs by a variety of underground artists, musicians and organisations. These special edition T-shirts are printed in limited runs of 100 shirts each. Once these have been sold, that's it, they won't be reprinted.

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